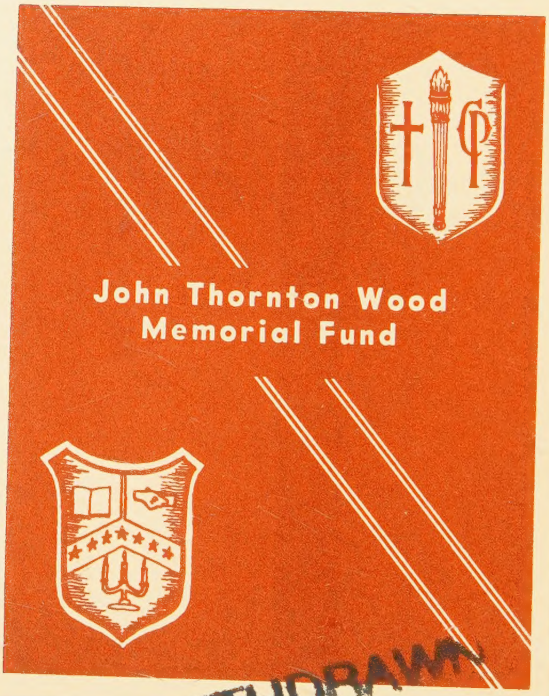
GUINEA-FOWL AND OTHER POULTRY

By Leonard Bacon



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ANIMULA VAGULA

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GUINEA-FOWL
AND OTHER POULTRY
BY
LEONARD BACON

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INTRODUCTION

Introductions are proverbially unread. In the case of the present volume the proverb will probably be justified. Nevertheless, one or two explanatory remarks happen to be appropriate and even necessary. One of the poems included between these covers was inadvertently the cause of one of the most elaborate literary jokes of recent years, and some brief account of it should be given if only to pay a belated tribute to the humor of the late Miss Amy Lowell.

The poem in question is entitled "The Banquet of the Poets." It was written to be read at a dinner attended by some Yale and Harvard men who were then on the faculty of the University of California. I subsequently published it anonymously in the *Occident*, a students' monthly at Berkeley. I further sent reprints among my friends, and more or less forgot about it. At this point Miss Lowell came upon the scene. She was edified by the sentiments of the poem and, like the sportswoman she was, took in excellent part such remarks as might be supposed to allude to the theory or tendency she represented. But this by no means estopped her from taking measures to revenge herself.

Some two years later I saw advertised in the public prints a work entitled, "A Critical Fable." I thought nothing of it till the morning mail began to bring me epistles whose tenor was in general: "My dear fellow:

Let me congratulate you on your writing a good book at last." Simultaneously the *Literary Review* printed categorically the statement that I was the author of "A Critical Fable." I wrote the *Literary Review* that I was not. Their answer was a column notice of the book with an unblushing assertion to the effect that I was. The flood of congratulatory letters came pouring on unchecked. And I was frightened and almost angry. But Heaven helped me. To relieve my troubled spirit I wrote a rhymed letter to Henry Canby, then the tutelary deity of the *Review*, denying the soft impeachment and attributing the book to Miss Lowell.

Thereupon Miss Lowell wrote a relative of mine that I must be lying. This was a scabrously immoral act. For I now began to appear as a perjurer who had told his story and meant to stick to it, but none the less I had made a lucky hit. I have before me as I write another letter of Miss Lowell's, in which she goes at length into the motives for her duplicity. All of which seems to me rather delicious. But for a bit of luck, I should have found myself playing a modern version of the rôle of Isaac Bickerstaff for the next ten years.

Nor can I refrain from a word of admiration for Miss Lowell's mendacity which ran the whole gamut from disingenuous innuendo to naked and shameless perversion of the fact. The humor which enabled her to revel in her sins is something which will be missed. I never knew her or even saw her, but how I wish I had!

A word should be added in this connection. Several of the figures of whom mention is made in this undignified poem are now dead. They were alive when it was

first published, and mirth, not polemic, was the object of the poem.

The poem called "The Mound-Builders" was delivered at the exercises of the Harvard Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa in June, 1926. I acknowledge the courtesy of the Chapter in permitting me to include it among these verses.

The two cowboy ballads in this volume are the joint effort of Mr. Rivers Browne and myself. The plots and the local color are his contribution. The working up and the versification are, with the exception of a line or two, my part of the work.

L. B.

For permission to use certain selections in this book, we are indebted to the following: The Literary Review, Saturday Review of Literature, The Yale University Press, The Providence Journal, Contemporary Verse and Harpers Magazine.

THE PRINCESS: A MEDLEY

ST. CLAIR'S ennui, to him the dreadful spring
Of griefs unnumbered, sing pedestrian Muse,
For time has plucked the feathers from your wing,
And you must hobble on in half-soled shoes.
Your subject for the present is a thing
Of shreds and patches which no muse would choose,
Did not the hard occasion summon her
To sing the fate of a man-milliner.

Say, Muse, if it be possible to say,
What madness or what passion could impel
A mild mechanical couturier,
Whom ladies liked since with such pomp and swell
He fashioned skirts, sudden to flee away
From his aristocratic clientèle.
Say, Muse, what God stirred up those countless ills,
And was it Love or Drink or unpaid bills?

Love played a part, but rather 'twas success
Achieved the catastrophe of Giles St. Clair,
And set the limit to his happiness.
For he who set the fashion for the fair,
Dictating the least detail of the dress
That dazzled in St. James or Grosvenor Square,
Perceived one day a phantom in his brain
That made ambition and his empire vain.

Three elements did speciously combine
To work his downfall—and each of them was mighty—
The Duchess of Fitzfulke, as I opine,
That "hardy old perennial Aphrodite"
Made famous by the late Lord Byron's line,
Played in his fate a naturally flighty
Part, of the sort that she had always played.
Much also hung on Sarah Joyce her maid,

As sweet a thing as e'er drew corset-lace
To breaking strain about a noble torso.
There was none other in Cadogan Place,
Whom coachmen, footmen, butlers did adore so.
St. Clair looked once on her rose-petal face.
She seemed like the fair Helen, only more so.
But though her beauty made the stars go pale
She was below him in the social scale.

And far from Regent Street—to Giles unknown
Labored a person with a fluent pen
In travail of an epic book thick-sown
With beauties we shall not behold again.
But he foresaw not as he wrought alone
What thing his work would mean to Gods and men,
M. Arnold's shudder, Carlyle's dyspeptic roar,
Or Giles St. Clair's imbroglio. D'abord

The Duchess of Fitzfulke I think was quite
St. Clair's best customer. That day she came
To have a gown let in that was too tight
Already. He held converse with the dame.

And his manner was respectful and polite.
The Lady called him by his Christian name,
As was her wont, and bent her wreathéd smiles
That took Don Juan once on her good Giles.

There was a gay warmth in her conversation
Which Sarah Joyce observed if he did not,
But the girl knew the duties of the station
To which she had been called—and had forgot
On principle many a similar observation.
She knew that Duchesses blew cold and hot
Like other people. Giles began to drape
The costume on her questionable shape—

Unaware that he was being fascinated.
And I am quite unable to impart
By what strange chain of things concatenated
A tailor could impress a ducal heart,
But so it was, for so it had been fated.
And suddenly he saw it with a start
A melting and aristocratic eye
Turned on him—"like a duck's about to die."

Sarah at that point came back to the room
Bearing some sacred vestment in her arms—
She did not know she was the stroke of doom.
St. Clair glanced briefly at her virgin charms,
Feeling his head spin as a man to whom
A question's put that baffles or alarms.
The Duchess' eye still with a brown glow burned.
He was half-sorry Sarah had returned—

As a vista of incredible romance
Rose up before him. Even if she were old,
Nevertheless the pomp and circumstance
Dazzled him. His interior went cold,
Dreaming of splendor. And here I must enhance
His character. He never thought of gold.
Pure snobbery controlled his soul that day.
Besides he was as rich as Paul Poiret.

A sudden self-importance filled his mind
Such as his fate had never sent before—
The sort of thing that struck Malvolio blind.
Men are like that. That's why the groundlings roar
To see him go cross-gartered. It's unkind.
But women smiling on us make us more
Asinine than efforts of our natural brain
In all its convolution can attain.

The women left. He pitied both sincerely,
Though he perhaps was chiefly to be pitied.
He saw the situation none too clearly,
Nor knew the strand that destiny had knitted,
Who in that hour glared over him severely.
Only odd fantasy within him flitted
On iridescent wings, strangely revealing
Women of every sort to him appealing,

Mixed with ideas in satin and cashmere.
His mind teemed queerly that November eve,
When as the London gas first glimmered blear
St. Clair sought out his club, there to relieve

His brain with literature and cheese and beer,
Nor thought what cuts the destinies achieve,
When they retailor at a stroke the pride
Of garments that we wear on our inside.

At the club, beside "Bell's Life" and "Yellowplush,"
Lay, as say Robert Service' works might lie
By "Arrowsmith" and "Judge," although I blush
For the simile, a work that caught his eye.
Yawning, he picked it up, nor heard the rush
And whistle of the wings of destiny,
Though many men have found that volume deadly.
It was "The Princess," which is styled a Medley.

O Tennyson—O Alfred Tennyson,
You were nemesis to Giles St. Clair I fear,
When you threw all the light of verse upon
A subject now worn thinner than the sheer
Cobweb of stockings duchesses might don,
Harking the call of fashion thin and clear.
O Tennyson, I blame your poem chiefly,
Begun too soon, and pondered much too briefly.

And yet what glamour and majestic power
That clothe that infinite nothing with a gleam
So visionary! For an enchanted hour
Giles read like an hypnotic in a dream.
Page after saccharine page did he devour
Feasting on nectar very like icecream,
While various thoughts rose in his troubled breast
Concerning noble dames whom he had dressed—

As also Sarah Joyce whom he had not,
An omission he had meant to rectify.
He had thought of her with or without a dot.
She was the sort of girl to whom to tie.
In fact he once had thought of her a lot,
And still could see her trousseau in his eye,
Dove grey with silver laces, furbelows,
And other matters needless to disclose.

But O the six-foot Ida, homicidal,
Grand, epic! O Thalestris! Rhodope
That built the Pyramid! An emotion tidal
Surged in him. A strange moon controlled the sea
Of consciousness. That once imagined bridal
Sudden displeased him to the last degree
Not even his duchess, by his art attired,
Was altogether what his soul required.

"Degenerate womankind that sew the sampler,"
(So thought magnanimously Giles St. Clair)
"Or you of pleasure's grape the timid trampler,
"I must have a woman fierce as she is fair.
"I must get out of this. I need an ampler
"Stage for my natural powers somehow, somewhere.
"With fifty thousand pounds in the consols,
"Why should I dress aristocratic dolls?

"Farewell then Duchess superannuated,
"Farewell then Sarah. You're a pretty being,
"But will not do." And so he meditated
A whole new radiant future, not foreseeing

What a tempestuous fortune him awaited.
He only felt that somehow he was fleeing
From common-place mortality's demesne
To lordlier passions and a loftier scene,

Where moved the hero-woman in her pride,
With lightning in her breast, yet cold as Everest,
At once the Vestal and the passionate bride.
St. Clair, St. Clair, think well what thou endeavorest,
Nor yield to thy blind sentimental side,
Moved by a poem which is not of the cleverest.
Hold hard, my son! In any case refuse
Seductions born of the Victorian Muse.

Forbear departure from familiar ways,
Think for a space, consider if you can
That woman is a delicate thing in stays,
Born to be flattered, fed, and clothed by man.
The poet reasons on no solid base,
And there is inconvenience in his plan.
Women as such, although I can't say why,
Were much too much in the Victorian eye.

Ah well-a-day! On the next morn at ten,
The fair Fitzfulke descending from her brough'm
Found that St. Clair was faithless like all men.
A pregnant note was in his waiting room,
Which did not say when he'd be back again.
He had departed to embrace his doom.
He had vanished, leaving not a wrack behind,
Save irritation in the lady's mind.

And the East Indiaman "Northumberland,"
Under her royals only, in a gale,
Was reaching outbound from her native strand.
St. Clair was retching by the weather rail,
Sea-sick as e'er was tailor. In his hand
He clutched "The Princess," resolute and pale.
Ideal notions could not overbear
The paroxysms of his mal de mer.

Why he had sailed for India, God may know.
Anyhow the "Northumberland" was sailing
At the moment psychological, and so
He went aboard A. Tennyson prevailing.
His destiny had altered at a blow,
And he stood quailing while the tars were brailing
The weather yard-arm, an occupation risky
In any tempest in the Bay of Biscay.

It is unfortunate for the historian
That the great ship had no great men aboard her
Whom I might mention as a good Victorian
And celebrate in due and proper order.
Would that John Newman, and Carlyle stentorian,
And Ruskin, art's dictator and recorder,
Had sailed on her, for had this been the case
The world would have escaped much common-place.

Much would not have been written that is not read.
There would not be a "Grammar of Assent."
"Frederick the Great" would lift no horrid head
In seven stricken tomes incontinent.

Much rot on pictures would remain unsaid
In a protracted prose magniloquent,
With which the reader's patience cannot cope.
But this of course was quite too much to hope.

Though Newman would have been a missionary
Whom cannibals with pleasure might devour.
In India Carlyle might be a very
Distinct success, for they like boring power,
Witness Tagore. Ruskin's vocabulary
Illimitable might entertain an hour
Mild Asiatics with its preciosity,
For as the inventors they admire verbosity.

But no such luck. The ship drove on apace
Across wild Biscay and past Finisterre.
The Atlantic bared its teeth and set its face,
Whirlwinds and whitened water everywhere.
The lightnings whipped. The thunder's double-bass
Roared over all like trumpets of despair,
As if it were its mission to appal
St. Clair and a vicegerent of Bengal,

Who were in point of fact quite terrified,
As they absorbed Dutch courage in the cuddy,
While the ship tottering shook from side to side,
With creaks that might discourage anybody.
They knew too well the pumps were being plied,
And had heard the captain shouting: "Put her bloody
Nose into it, you —— —— Limehouse blokes,"
To the quartermasters gripping the helm-spokes.

Night came like the Assyrian on the fold.
A pallid steward lit the cuddy-lamp.
Ghastly the ship in the Tornado rolled.
They heard the biting tempest roar and ramp.
"If it kept up like this ——." Their hearts grew cold.
They sought their berths disconsolate and damp.
Nothing perhaps can overcome the brain
Like a good Gulf of Guinea hurricane.

St. Clair slept not. Ere dawn there came a yell
From the captain that he heard above the storm,
A raucous cry, apostrophising Hell,
Perfectly calculated to inform
The passengers that matters were not well.
Scrambling up the jammed passageways did swarm,
With thundering hearts, those luckless and my tailor,
And on the deck were told by a scared sailor

That the ship was laboring hard off a lee-shore.
Far off they saw a surf of platinum fire
Momently growing, and heard a rabid roar,
As the "Northumberland," helmless, drifted nigher.
High on the quarterdeck the captain swore
That "he'd be damned, and he was not a liar."
In vain they strove out of the bay to buck.
Near the reef breached, and with a jolt she struck.

Her back was snapped as if a giant's hand
Had smitten upon her from the hateful skies.
That was the end of the "Northumberland,"
As you might not unnaturally surmise.

She went to pieces like a village band
Attempting Richard Strauss's harmonies.
And the piling waves over her bulwarks played
With the crash and racket of a cannonade.

"Then rose from Earth to Heaven the wild ——"
You know
The rest of it. There was a dreadful panic.
One boat was swallowed in the undertow,
And one upset as the passion of Satanic
Terror o'erwhelmed the sailors in their woe.
St. Clair had fastened with a grip mechanic
To something, hencoop, marlin-spike, or stay,
Which, as all things were giving in, gave way.

Anyhow it was something that would float,
And which drove shoreward with the wind and tide.
Lucky for him that he escaped the boat,
Laden too deep in such a surf to ride.
For presently the coal-black whirlwind smote
That cockle-shell, which perished in its pride,
While Giles St. Clair fast clinging to his oar,
Or spar, or mast, at last was washed ashore

On an expanse of stinking tropic mud,
With a malodorous vegetation green.
Some scraggy palms by the sea-margent stood,
Their gaunt leaves rasping in the storm-wind keen.
Vast weariness had overcome his blood,
And though the place "looked, smelled, and was obscene,"
After a pace or two, as lightning struck,
He dropped and slumbered sweetly in the muck.

He slept, or so it seemed, for years and years,
And woke at last under a cloudless sky,
To find two colored gentlemen with spears,
Regarding him with no unkindly eye.
Their smiles, in fact, went right round to their ears,
And they addressed him long and volubly,
And presently, as friendly darkies oughter,
Gave him some biscuit and a gourd of water.

And then they marched him up through the morass
Inland, where o'er the forest hung a smoke.
His mind was numb still. 'Twas a pretty pass,
And he had not recovered from the stroke.
They reached a village of domed huts of grass,
Which to a real animation woke,
On his arrival. He was a sensation,
And there was crowding and much conversation.

They were extremely kind to him. A hut
Partially over-run with centipedes,
They gave him. It was not attractive, but
It had to be sufficient for his needs.
Then they with proper ceremonial cut
A fat cur's throat, and held a feed of feeds.
And Giles St. Clair gorged himself like a hog
On a meal made up of palm-wine and burnt dog.

O Fate, had not St. Clair endured enough?
Nay his adventures were not over yet.
African palm-wine's penetrating stuff.
He had been weary, and extremely wet.

His sleep upon the beach was a mere bluff,
A mild Morphéan cock-tail, just to whet
The appetite for slumber, that oppressed him.
He slept among the centipedes—God rest him—

A deathly slumber, and he did not hear
What might have waked the dead, when the cock crew
Ere dawn. Upon his slumber-deadened ear
Came but the echo of a hullabaloo.
It was pitch-dark still. Suddenly a clear
And piercing howl tore his ear-drums in two,
And shriek and gun-fire in a thunderquake
Roused him. He sat up in his lair awake.

Flame blazed on every side of him. The clatter
Of half-drilled musketry spattered and volleyed.
St. Clair leaped up erect, his brains a-scatter
Out of his centipedal slumbers squalid.
Over his head he heard stray bullets batter.
And the thick flame made the thick dark look solid.
He hesitated for a second cowering.
His sleep-dazed eyes beheld a form uptowering.

He turned to run, but something struck him hard
With an irrevocable decisive crack,
That laid him flatter than a calling-card.
The whole disgusting universe went black,
That had for him of late been evil-starred,
Nor did his much-tried consciousness come back
Till two hours later when the night had fled,
And he came to with a terrific head.

The world was altered when St. Clair awoke.
Africa often has these savage clashes.
The little village had gone up in smoke,
And what was left was mainly dust and ashes.
The army which had struck the dreadful stroke
Prowled round the ruins in pursuit of caches.
Their leader, glaring a most martial glare,
Examined with attention Giles St. Clair.

St. Clair's poor eyes were swimming in his head,
The effect of palm-wine and that brutal blow,
Either of which, I think it may be said,
Were quite enough to bring one pretty low.
He looked upon the foe with natural dread.
It could not be—could it? Yet it was so.
That legion was made up of dreadful hussies,
Sooty as Hell and armed with blunderbusses.

And the leader—yes, by Heaven—was a she
As feminine as Judith or Salome,
Epic and homicidal as could be.
Was none more murderous in all Dahomey.
There was no heroine of antiquity,
Thalestris, Penthesilea (caro nome),
Or Jael by the couch of Sisera kneeling,
"Who could have cut a throat with better feeling."

She was the most unbeautiful heroine
That I (or any other bard) have chosen,
Black as my hat and savager than sin,
Or any she that wears, or wears not, hosen.

Her baleful eye was like black gelatin.
Her lips were hard and curled like serpents frozen.
And as for form, that unattractive niggah
Was bone, enhanced by vast steatopyga.

And furthermore hers was that dull expression
Successful soldiers generally wear.
It's an essential part of their profession,
More than their uniforms or croix de guerre.
In their dead eyes and in their lips' compression,
There is the look of a sore-headed bear,
Or a wild boar's that champs among the husks,
With tooth-ache in his ulcerated tusks.

St. Clair observed that military maid,
That unexpected Venus, who might have risen
Out of Hell's Lake when "the fiery surge was laid,"
Miltonically my story to bedizen.
And on him her appalling glances played.
Her lips a wintry smile framed, harsh and wizen,
Which, whether or not it were designed to win him,
Tied his intestines into knots within him.

At length she rose erect from where she squatted,
And looking round with an abstracted air,
She shouted to her followers, who trotted
From every part of the wrecked village there.
Them she harangued, while two among them knotted
Behind his back the wrists of Giles St. Clair,
Who, as he stood there, helpless in their clutches,
Wished he were sticking pins into the Duchess.

St. Clair was destined never to forget
The march that followed into the Interior,
Through the morasses dank with feverish wet,
Than Dante's trip through the Inferno drearier—
But the dry plain was more infernal yet.
The heat oppressed him. He grew ever wearier,
And sicker, you may readily believe,
As the hideous sun sank each appalling eve.

Till even a psychologist might spy
A something half-humane, quite like a glitter
Of pity in the dull gelatinous eye
Of the leader. She extemporized a litter,
In which four stalwarts of her company
Bore him along. No pugilist were fitter
For that tough task. After his griefs unnumbered,
Tossing on their shoulders, like a babe he slumbered.

He was rather feverish when he woke once more,
And his poor head was aching quite a lot.
Some object 'gainst his side was pressing sore,
Which from his pocket finally he got.
It was the volume on the sexes' war,
Now much the worse for dry and liquid rot.
It had enlarged his mind, but, be it said,
In the process he had got a broken head.

The leaves fell open as he bumped along,
Smeared and discolored with sea-water stain.
But the facile lines limped strangely and went wrong.
A mind and body under too much strain

Take kindly to no philosophic song.
But Homer, Shakespeare, Rabelais, Montaigne,
Goethe, and Dante at that juncture would
Have done a hero or tailor little good.

For God alone could say what yet behind
Harsh fate might hold. He had a horrible fear.
Those dreadful women, though at present kind,
Might eat the captives of their bow and spear.
Soul-terrifying scenes oppressed his mind,
As the leader eyed him with a curious leer.
Women especially the soul disquiet,
Who look on men as articles of diet.

That night they halted. There arose debate
Betwixt that Tomyris and her ebon staff.
He saw her by the fire gesticulate.
He heard the clanking cackle of her laugh,
Onomatopoea cannot imitate.
Proleptically he wrote his epitaph.
Better men than he might feel the ground quake under
'em
Confronted by so dreadful a conundrum.

The murmurous debate reached the dimension
Of a bitter quarrel. There was verbal clash,
Which went, of course, beyond all comprehension,
Until the leader in a furious flash
Rendered one heroine worthy of a pension,
With a terrific catastrophic smash.
There is no argument we must suppose
So telling as a war-club on the nose.

That ended it, and if for the menu
St. Clair was destined, the dinner was delayed.
When the next crowned triumphant dawning drew
Her rosy fingers through a vaporous braid,
They did not march, but tarried while the dew
Smoked up. St. Clair a decent breakfast made
Upon two roasted plantains and broiled meat,
While the army crowded round to watch him eat.

The leader, squatting on the ground beside him,
Amusedly his diet superintended,
And with a glance proprietary eyed him,
In which a sort of tenderness was blended.
St. Clair scarce knew what all this might betide him.
Although he felt his agony was ended,
He had a dreadful prescience that his charms
Had captivated that fierce hag-at-arms,

Nor her alone. It seemed he was the fashion.
A dozen ladies' eyes began to glitter
With fury, as he finished off his ration,
For the privilege of carrying his litter.
The leader quelled that little burst of passion,
(At quelling outbreaks she was a pinch-hitter)
And, having squelched the momentary mutiny,
Walked on by him, continuing her scrutiny.

Reader, I think you never have been studied
By one who does not know embarrassment,
Hour after hour, with fervency cold-blooded.
It is provocative of discontent.

St. Clair despaired, as on the litter thudded,
Those fearful eyes upon him always bent.
At length he turned aside with a sick moan
That showed how much he wished he were alone.

The lady started with a feminine start.
One of the litter-bearers laughed aloud,
Which was a sad mistake upon her part.
Upon the leader's countenance a cloud
Blackened her midnight, as from her dread heart
Pulsed up the wild emotion fierce and proud.
With one inclusive and back-handed blow
She laid two of the litter bearers low.

Down came the litter. Down came Giles St. Clair
In the much trampled trail upon his nose.
Up rose together the infuriate pair.
Above him an Homeric contest rose.
Trampling, they raged. Their wild yells rent the air.
He heard the shock and thud of dreadful blows,
Till suddenly an awful silence reigned,
For discipline once more had been maintained.

The guardswoman who had not laughed was dead.
She who was guilty of that mirth ill-timed
Writhed in the pathway with a broken head,
While the huge leader, all her form sublimed
With animal fury certainly ill-bred,
Raged in a style no bard that ever rhymed
Could well describe, however great his lore,
Command of words, or range of metaphor.

For Goneril and Regan and Tamora,
Lady Macbeth and Thackeray's Catherine Hayes,
Medea when the final wrath came o'er her,
Might well have envied that cold shocking blaze
Of brutal wrath. No second-rate Hell-roarer,
She proved, a fiend complete beyond all praise,
And quite inimitable this side of Hell
By Bernhardt, Duse, Terry, or Rachel.

There is something wholly admirable in wrath,
No matter how commingled with brutality,
That headlong follows its terrific path
To the hideous destination of finality,
Utterly reckless of the aftermath,
Levelling all consequences to equality,
Though cultivated men of every age
Are always prone to undervalue rage.

While women, whether they be cultivated
Or no, have fountains of pure indignation
Always on tap. In them is concentrated
A force that goes beyond all estimation.
They dare all laws that e'er were legislated
Except their own peculiar legislation,
As that poor maimed amazon on the ground,
To her bitter cost, had very nearly found.

Her eye had been half-gouged in the mellay,
But her o'erthrower was not satisfied.
She summoned in a manner dégagé
Some of her stalwarts to the victim's side,

Who drew their knives, and were about to flay
Alive the wretched thing, though what her hide
Was good for, I for one can't see at all.
As the knife touched her she let out a squawl

That roused St. Clair out of his panic numb.
He clutched the knees of the black tyraness,
And shrieked above the pandemonium
Poor pitiful English phrases of distress.
His speech was but the yammering of the dumb,
But the leader got his meaning none the less.
Her furious face relaxed, as she beheld
The horror and pity in his eyes that welled.

There was a daring person once who wrote
Of the ennobling influence of Man
On Woman, whom, if I knew his name, I'd quote
Because his theory fits into my plan.
For to that subject now I must devote
A line or two as deftly as I can,
With my best literary tact revealing
How savage breasts may yield to gentler feeling.

St. Clair's pathetic cry, his prayers, his tears,
Made on the savage mind a deep impression.
She leered at him her leeriest of leers,
And kicked the object of his intercession,
Whereupon all the other musketeers
Laughed the metallic laugh of their profession,
Laughter half sneer, half compliment, complex
Tribute to the weakness of the other sex.

That chivalrous surrender to his plaint
Surely became the military houri,
Who thus had put so splendid a constraint
Upon the access of her natural fury.
Her motives I do not pretend to paint,
As on her virtues I am from Missouri.
But from that moment, as was only fair,
She rose in the opinion of St. Clair.

Not that he liked her! No, not in the least!
With that appalling form, that fearful smile!
Though he saw that he had power upon the beast,
He might as well have liked a crocodile,
Or a rhinoceros in armour creased,
Or any other dreadful animile.
Still it is good to feel one has control
Over the powers of an inferior soul,

And use that power for good, softening the hard,
And stiffening weaker fibres, with intent
To make what heavy-handed fate has marred—
Though it may be a trifle insolent.
Giles inadvertently had played that card.
It made him darling of the regiment,
But this by no means freed him from the infernal
Blandishments and attentions of the Colonel.

That night he had a chicken for his dinner
That had been broiled by no inferior hand.
The inner woman yearned to feed the inner
Man with the very best at her command.

And if she knew it, he would not grow thinner.
She gave him palm-wine of the finest brand,
And a crack squad, his pleasure to enhance,
After the meal performed a fearful dance,

Symbolical of sacrifice and slaughter,
Hellish black shapes against the firelight yellow,
And simulating battle without quarter,
They rent the satin darkness with their bellow.
Palm-wine is nine-tenths alcohol plus water,
And so St. Clair sank presently in mellow
Slumbers despite the cataclysmic din,
And the appalling leader tucked him in.

Next day he knew somehow that they were nearing
Whatever goal it was that they were seeking.
He was much better, and he slept unfearing,
As on they bore him in the litter creaking.
Signs of inhabitants began appearing,
And about noon with loud exultant shrieking,
The equivalent of a victorious paean,
They reached a capital village Dahoméan,

The royal seat of Gezo, cruel Lord,
Whose tyranny no words of mine can utter,
Who ruled the region round by fire and sword,
From Quampanusa unto Abeokutta,
Head-devil of a desolating horde,
Whose names would make the twelve apostles stutter.
Even tongues of fire would suffer inflammation,
Trying West African pronunciation.

Before the palace did they halt at last,
Returned from foray with a famous spoil.
The savage monarch had a savage cast
Of countenance, all gleaming with palm oil.
His features were severe. His paunch was vast,
Like all barbarians who do not toil.
About him stood eunuchs and caboceers,
And men and maids-at-arms with guns and spears.

But lo the cry is "Tava." From her place
Strode forward Giles' great captress, with an air
Such as field-marshals of a lighter race
In moments of success are wont to wear.
With strange gesticulation and grimace,
Pointing her index finger at St. Clair,
She stood erect, so vigorous were her powers,
And made the king a speech for several hours.

Gezo of course had seen white men before,
Ornaments of the black-bird trade Brazilian,
Stiff captains of itinerant men-of-war,
With purple beaks and uniforms vermilion,
As also missionaries by the score.
But he was not prepared for the civilian
Of Cockneydom. Oh God, is there no rhyme
To paint that radiance seen for the first time?

By some strange human instinct he divined
From Giles's general air of wretchedness,
One could take liberties of any kind
With this poor animal in its distress.

And this was not displeasing to a mind
That loved a seal of terror to impress
On everything that lived, body and soul,
Which by ill luck came under its control.

At last he gave an order. Epicene
Creatures strode forward. You scarce knew what they
were,
Except that they were something in between
Pronominal words denoting "him" and "her."
They stripped poor Giles upon the village green,
Who did not think it timely to demur
And with his clothing, it must be narrated,
Tennyson's "Princess" too was confiscated.

His modesty that day received a shock
That rather dwarfed what else was to endure.
From the multitude's barbaric gibe and mock,
He was of course linguistically secure.
But thus to be exposed without a frock
Was outrage, agony, and horror pure.
Few tailors would have paid more high I know
For a fig-leaf or a yard of calico.

Night came. Into a prison like a stye
They thrust him, and set over him as gaoler
That damaged female with the half-gouged eye,
Who with her other watched the embarrassed tailor,
It seemed to Giles far, far too curiously.
And when at last King Morpheus did assail her,
The olfactory compliment she paid to Morpheus
Reminded him of anything but Orpheus.

Night dragged along. A late lopsided moon
Deliberate climbed the sky. A feverish doze
O'ercame him, when outside the barracoon
A sound as of a shadow on its toes
Aroused him. And a figure that seemed hewn
By an amateur from basalt o'er him rose.
Too well—too well he recognized that jet,
Misshapen and ungainly silhouette—

Tava herself who whispered gruff and low
What Giles of course could hardly understand.
He knew ten Dahoméan words or so
By this. But she was in a hurry, and
Was trying to his ignorance to show
Some features of the customs of her land,
Which to the reader I must now impart,
Because they were at variance with her heart.

Know then that in Dahomey amazons,
In the lingo of the Guinea Coast, are "dashed"
To the king. They are concubines and myrmidons,
In either of their functions unabashed.
And that man is the chief of simpletons,
And into little pieces will be smashed,
Whoso by chance shall cast an eye too partial
Upon the graces of those ladies martial.

Furthermore in Dahomey they have Gods
To whom they pray to save them from disease,
From snake and spider-bite and emerods,
Elephantiasis and fetiches,

From the king's anger, and uneven odds.
And to them they offer curiosities.
Gods are so human. Any little oddity
To them is a desirable commodity.

This, be it known, had instantly occurred
To the great King Gezo when he saw St. Clair.
When Tava's whole narration he had heard,
He complimented her on the affair,
Said he enjoyed her saga every word,
And that upon the morrow in the square
Some god or other, who had not been nice
Recently, would enjoy a sacrifice.

Right there the Princess Tava in opinion
Differed with her liege-lord, whose natural quality
Of mercy had been strained like the Hercynian
Bear's. But she was a maid of high mentality,
And knew too much to question his dominion,
Which would of course be rankest immorality,
Pure irreligion, and lèse majesté.
But o'er the mountains love will find a way.

Risking her life, she sought Giles' place of rest,
Where an amazon ought never to be caught.
By whisper and by sign she did her best
To elucidate the complicated thought,
Which in the last four stanzas I've expressed.
He only gathered that the dawn was fraught
For him with peril, and was in no state
With which a brave girl could co-operate.

Suddenly a cock crew, and his wardress grumbled
In her crepitating sleep. The Princess fled.
In Giles's brain thunders of horror rumbled.
Already he had given himself for dead.
The tropic sun rose with a bang. He mumbled
Despairing prayers. Despairing tears he shed.
His cyclops gaoler's good eye roaming o'er him,
Gave evidence that she was sorry for him.

If he had had a watch, then without fail
It would have ticked with horrible hammer-blows,
Like the late Oscar Wilde's in Reading Gaol.
His moments prickled like woolen underclo'es.
Terror was being driven like a nail
Through a brain paralysed by countless woes.
He might have either died or gone insane
In the ecstasy of his prefigured pain.

They led him forth. He knew that it was coming.
Grim figures stood before him in the square.
But fear provides an anodyne benumbing,
And his wild eyes had lost their dreadful glare.
Nothing he saw, and only heard the drumming
Blood in his ears. They halted to prepare
His neck for the high-priest's attentions, but
Just as that worthy raised his knife to cut,

Something whizzed past the shoulder of St. Clair,
Which roused him from his lethargy. Surprise
And the gleam of agony too hard to bear
Glared at him out of the priest's startled eyes.

A well-thrown spear had pierced that person where
In man the Adam's apple takes its rise.
"Ok"—gulped the priest and dropped. And as the crowd
Surged, something through it, like a tempest, plowed,

Silent and furious, and snatching Giles
Up like a baby, bore him from the place.
Off went the blunderbusses. Heavy piles
Of vapor seemed to burst before his face.
The uproar might be heard for several miles.
His rescuer, rushing at a fearful pace,
Into the compound of the palace turning,
Caught up a brand from where a fire was burning,

And threw it in the thatch. Out burst the flame
As by art magic from the blazing brand.
Divided interest was her little game,
And a strong wind into a furnace fanned
The palace. Ere a man could say his name,
The blazing holocaust that she had planned
Barred the infuriate pursuit, who found
It most expedient to go around.

She cut his bonds in that curt breathing-space.
Northward away out of the town they fled.
If Paavo Nurmi had been in that race,
He would have dropped at the first mile-post dead.
Behind them they could hear the howling chase.
But they were nearly half a mile ahead.
Suddenly a little river came in view,
Where an old woman sat in a canoe.

Her, Tava without ceremony smote
Dead as a door-nail. The victim did not scream.
Quickly they hopped aboard the little boat,
And Tava headed like a shot down stream.
Around a bend they went. Afar a note
Rose up, like hell-hounds questing in a dream.
Out of the East a thunder-squall, high-piled,
Spitting blue lightning, neared them. Tava smiled.

It was great luck. On through the rampant squall
She paddled still. Nor did she give two raps,
Though the rain descended in a squalid pall,
And the lightning flickered in their very laps.
Giles, as the slashing rain-drops ceased to fall,
Collapsed in a succession of brief naps,
From which he woke to find the amazon
With unremitting fury paddling on.

As some wise writer says: "They had more heart
To flee than the pursuit had to pursue,"
Though the pursuit were outraged on their part,
And the King Gezo felt distinctly blue
And greatly shocked. It always makes one start
To have one's favorite high-priest stabbed right through
The larynx by a princess. Truth to tell,
The high-priest's funeral was a nonpareil.

By which time, nearly six-score miles removed,
Tava and Giles, in what is now Nigeria,
Slept the terrific sleep that them behoved,
After a getaway without superior.

Of course Giles felt her friendship had been proved,
But the prospect, though less dangerous was drearier.
Few men, I think, could see themselves at all
With that Virginia in the rôle of Paul.

He woke to find the Princess with a grin
Considering him. Sudden he understood
How utterly and entirely he was in
The lady's power. A chill went through his blood,
Such as might freeze a bosom feminine,
Meeting a brutal peasant in a wood.
He noted her vast forearm carved in bronze,
And felt he was fed up on amazons.

And yet the dame had saved him from those hateful
Barbaric brutes, and with her good right arm
Fended his weakness. Should not one be grateful
To valor that has rescued one from harm?
Except for her he would have been a plateful
Of réchauffée. But then she had no charm.
He found the effort futile to adjust
His real gratitude, sincere disgust.

If she made love to him, what should he do?
It did not seem unlikely that she would.
And if he should her blandishments eschew,
She might get angry, which he knew she could.
That look of hers would turn gorillas blue,
And that harsh cheek, oily like swampy mud—
Was it a nightmare? Would he yet awake?
She was looking at him. There was no mistake.

The giant and the veriest dwarf of letters,
Of all conditions and of every sort,
Have each his set of intellectual fetters,
And each of them his corresponding forte.
Lord Byron's was description which none betters,
At least according to his own report.
My own I find, by copious induction,
Is always the laborious reconstruction

Of states of mind, and such anxieties
As all men suffer, actual sensation,
The heart's dull trouble, or the brain's disease
Engage with special force by contemplation,
And on such matters with delight I seize.
And whatsoever my delineation
May lack, still with a clumsy necromancy
I can exhibit the disordered fancy.

Not that I understand it! Heaven forbid!
Shakespeare himself would not have made that boast.
But I adventure after matters hid
Like an explorer off the unknown coast
Of a far undiscovered Hesperid,
Who sees his island rising like a ghost
Anadyomene. So the mists unroll
A moment from the enigmatic soul.

Hence I can't fathom what the appalling smiles
Of the appalling Tava might imply.
Were they maternal, or the artless wiles
Of feminine and amorous savagery.

At any rate they disconcerted Giles,
Who could not look the lady in the eye.
She for her part, whatever else she lacked,
Treated him with a quite uncalled-for tact.

Only he felt in that large rolling eye
The sense of something deeply interfused,
And knew his weakness imperceptibly
Growing, as down the abhorrent stream they cruised.
Helplessness and her black immensity
Constrained him though no violence was used.
Once feigning sleep, from too much terror weak,
He felt her leathern fingers pat his cheek.

And once awaking from a feverish dream,
Where he had slumbered on the fetid shore,
Three inches off, the diabolic gleam
Of her tremendous eye-balls hovered o'er
His face. He started upward with a scream.
Their noses bumped. And his distilled much gore.
Her vasty bosom heaved. He understood
No whit her feelings as she saw the blood.

The river bore them like the flood of death.
Blackly it ran, unending mile on mile,
To itself chuckling, as a man who saith:
"I shall take vengeance in a little while."
The enormous trees creaked at the slightest breath,
And swirling past the boat, the crocodile
Made the deep smoke, or hippopotami
Glanced at him with imperfect sympathy.

And here, delightful reader, I designed
To introduce a group of purple patches,
Tropical scenes unparalleled in kind,
Such as the great dead Conrad seldom matches.
But after sober second thought I find,
Though I could write that sort of thing in batches,
That the best policy for men of sense
Is to employ a measure of suspense.

Hence to the Duchess of Fitzfulke I turn,
Who, as I was at pains to state, was miffed,
And felt so fierce an irritation burn
That she would not have had him for a gift—
His very memory she sought to spurn.
Yet in her lute there was a virtual rift.
Four months went by. Presently came to hand
News of the loss of the "Northumberland."

And shortly Sir Payne Pillsbury disclosed
(He at the time was Galen's standard bearer)
That her Grace the Duchess, being indisposed,
Was cruising in her own yacht to Madeira.
He had himself her trouble diagnosed,
And felt that a sea-voyage would repair her.
Like all physicians worthy of their hire,
He quite fell in with the invalid's desire.

So the white yacht "Don Juan" put to sea
With toadies and attendants by the score,
With dance and music and wine flowing free.
But even the Duchess voted it a bore.

The errand of a fool it seems to me.
And when she heard the Guinea surf's long roar,
And saw white stars aloft the tropic night,
She yearned for London and the Argand Light.

For after all she had had out all her whim.
She would indeed have liked to find the tailor.
But even if found, what could she do with him?
His place too was pre-empted by a sailor
Vacuous of face and muscular of limb,
To whom she had been tempted to unveil her
Peculiar soul, though at the point she quailed,
And her peculiar soul continued veiled.

They were hove to for the night. The quarter-deck
Was pleasant with light airs. O'er the white roar
Of surf, far off she saw a scarlet speck
Of fire that made more lonely the black shore.
Suddenly she felt old and weak, the wreck
Of what she had been twenty years before.
A pulse of sad delight beat in her face,
Remembering Don Juan's strange embrace.

Where was he now? and her dead Duke? Her mind
Conjured up scene after forgotten scene.
Memory grows rampant when the eyes are blind,
And her tears welled for lovers that had been.
To some she had been kind, to some unkind.
Tears, idle tears! I know not what they mean.
Neither did Giles St. Clair, who wept and wept
Beside his black protectress where she slept.

He too beheld a light, far out at sea,
Tossing at a masthead—not to be attained—
Beyond the surf that hammered woundily.
All night his overflowing eyeballs strained
Through the gross darkness. A little wind got free,
And suddenly the night her horses reined.
The dawn came with a crash. Beyond the rip
Of roaring surf hung like a dream a ship.

Giles never knew how through the crash and spume
Tava's strong arm drove out the little boat.
He saw green concave breakers o'er him loom,
And had enough ambition left to note
A shark's black fin, that watched upon their doom.
By skill or strength or luck they kept afloat.
Sudden the turmoil ended like a spell
Of evil. On they went o'er the slow swell.

Yet ever on beside them swept the fin,
That on the smooth swell wrote an arrowy mark.
Giles in the bow raised up a shout like sin.
He had forgotten all about the shark.
He saw the crew were hauling anchors in.
"O Christ, for power to make those devils hark."
Tava, who saw his wits begin to addle,
Leaned with more fierce exertion on the paddle.

Ere they shook out a stitch, the boat she brought
Right along side, hard under the fore-chains.
Convulsively the martingale he caught.
Hope like a flame burst upward in his brains.

Up o'er the sprit he swarmed, as quick as thought,
And did not even thank her for her pains.
There he beheld, recovered from her sulk
Of yestere'en—the Duchess of Fitzfulke,

Who gazed at him in her Fourth Georgian manner,
Then as you know a trifle démodé.
She turned much redder than a Soviet banner
Then white as sepulchres that close decay.
She did not scream, or faint, or shout "Hosanna,"
But managed, as a duchess should, to say
"Mr. St. Clair himself—Do take a chair,
"And ask your friend aboard, Mr. St. Clair."

Giles turned about where on the uneasy foam
Rode Tava, gazing with much troubled eyes.
Inviting a stray anaconda home
Is the sort of thing which I, for one, despise.
He looked from the blue sea to the blue dome,
Feeling such entertainment might surprise
The lady, and addressed her in a spasm
Of embarrassment wanting enthusiasm.

She listened, as we listen when the pot
That brews damnation for us starts to brew.
She could not blanch of course, and she did not.
But her lopsided features wrenched askew.
It was not what he said. "What he forgot
To say was that which sent the tremors through
Her form." And that which made it truly hateful,
Was this, that she could see that he was grateful.

Hampered he was by her gross dialect,
Yet there's a language she could understand
Which goes for something, I, for one, suspect,
Even in a crude Ewa-speaking land.
Sudden his trickle of pale thanks she checked,
Raising her mighty and impatient hand.
A black fire flickered in the eyes of Tava.
Volcanic words flowed from her lips like lava

In one vast, savage, preternatural curse.
Up in the stern-sheets she reared stark and high,
Imprecating Hell upon the universe,
On the detestable earth and sea and sky,
On woman who is weak, on man who's worse,
On things that live forever, on things that die,
And for a crashing period she smote
The paddle through the bottom of the boat.

Down went the shallop stern first 'neath her weight.
The light bow reared a second from the wave.
One final yell she yelled against her fate,
When 'neath the shadow of the ship there drave
A white streak through the water, grim and great.
As the shark struck her not a cry she gave.
The water boiled, as where by rock-pools brown
The square-tail takes the royal coachman down.

That night as the "Don Juan" far away
Stood out to sea, under the westering stars,
And the white horses in perpetual play
Cantered or leaped over eternal bars,

Anew the deep boiled white and silver-grey,
And carrion things, lean dog-fishes and gars,
Struggled and tore in the tormented dark
At the panting carcase of a dying shark.

And three months later at St. Clement Danes,
Where the great Doctor wont to pray of old,
The organ pealed to matrimonial strains,
And the red carpet at the gate unrolled.
The Duchess trailing one of Giles's trains,
And like a Turner sunset to behold,
Stood by the altar gloriously arrayed,
While Giles swore faith forever—to her maid.

And scarce to Brighton fled the happy pair,
When her great Grace abandoned her abode,
Where she had known Don Juan, Giles, and care.
The oratory in the Brompton Road
Attracted her, and we will leave her there,
Because 'twas there good Doctor Newman showed
Her Grace the path to some important choices,
Where there is peace far, far beyond these voices.

EVENING IN GREAT PORTLAND STREET

(James Boswell speaks to his son Alexander)

IF I was drunk last night, what is it to thee?
Wise men were so before, and yet will be.
But it was wretched port. A doctor? No!
I shall be better in an hour or so.
Your intonation is not kind, my son—

You're a Scotch numbskull, when all's said and done,
Who hate—ay hate—my book, and feel disgraced
By virtue and by fame, by truth and taste,
By everything I had and you have not.
At length I know why Johnson loathed a Scot.
You never waited, troubled and distrait,
While Beauclerk tarried two long hours away.
Eheu fugaces—hours that would not fly,
Even though charmed away by Lady Di.
But Beau *did* come at last. That was a night!
Burke, Reynolds, Goldsmith, and that central light
Of my existence, whom I yet reflect,
Being of the elect, my son, of the elect,
The elect, who know it grateful to the mind
The pure reward of certitude to find,
Sweet to the soul, floating in dereliction,
To base at last upon superb conviction.
That Johnson gave me. Then I could lay hold
On thought, and know base metal from true gold,

And seize the pure idea, unrefined
And virgin from the matrix of the mind.

Men have laughed at me, that I jotted down
What was their only title to renown.
Yet Beauclerk might have thanked his generous fate
Because *I* saw how little things are great.
Fame is a solid, say they what they will
For long years hence they will be living still.
They lived and loved and laughed at me. I proved
To others that they laughed and lived and loved.
Though, it may be, some after age will find
Their figures but the fiction of my mind,
And century after century insist
Upon the whimsy of a novelist.
(Centuries themselves perhaps foredoomed to be
Parentheses in future history.)

Grant my impertinence! grant I was absurd!
Yet it was greatness, that I saw and heard.
And is it not my merit, that I drew
The features of the greatness that I knew?
Is it not well for later time to hear
The voice of Johnson, genial and severe?
Johnson who hated Hume and Whigs and Traitors,
Scotchmen and Hacks and Cant, and loved good Haters,
Good English, and the King, and Church and State,
And set unclouded in the gulfs of Fate.

Let 'em laugh at my note-books. It was much
To have the ears of Midas—and the touch,—

To lime the winged wisdom of an age,
The obviously immortal on my page,
Knowing, however well the form I caught,
'Twas but the shadow thrown by radiant thought,
The uncapturable thing that still escapes,
Though seen, Protean, in a thousand shapes.
I saw, what is suspected now and then,
A motion forward in the minds of men,
And, in a waste of things and thoughts a-swarm,
Perceived a wholeness in the multiform,
Perceived, was dazzled by excess of light,
And—drunk on execrable port last night.
Here's Aleck, glum and with reproving eyes.
Come, come, my son! "Don't attitudinize!"

FAME

AS I came down into the Place of Spain,
Above the motors tooting in the streets
I heard a voice that asked, "Well, who was Keats?"
In the best accent of Nebraska's plain.
A thin but rigid female, who in vain
Perused her Baedeker's close-printed sheets,
Answered: "An Irish Poet," scattering sweets
Of information to the Vast Inane.

Who was he? A voice, forgotten in some quarters
Apparently. The mortal lyric cry
Stilled by the house where the man came to die;
A lost identity of long ago;
Music and love quenched by the many waters.
Who was he? Do the critics really know?

AFTERNOON TEA

"WHAT, no more tea? Do have a cigarette."
You are very pretty, but it's very plain
That you don't see beyond the driving rain
That bush-grown wall, that dog-eared parapet,
Which somehow I can't manage to forget,
Despite your pleasant chat. But I refrain
From comment. "Nice to see you once again.
"Sorry you go to-morrow. Glad we met."

Tea, cigarettes, automobiles, and calls
On others like yourself! Well, it may be
It would not add to your felicity
To know that aforetime, where you chattered thus,
The starving Goths yelled from the cracking walls,
Shaken by the engines of Belisarius.

ROTARY

THIS country has been dipt in sentiment
As a fabric might be dipped in gorgeous dyes,
The hues of earth that mimic fiery skies,
Gold, azure, emerald, scarlet insolent,
Contrasting, or with cunning purpose blent,
To dazzle or to charm Barbaric eyes
That view the medley with a wild surprise,
And go in time to their own land content.

Tell not the laity. The vulgar pulse
That beats in all, beats with due vigor here.
Rome has her Main Street too, it would appear,
Though named from some earth shaker from Savoy,
Who hustled in his time and got results.
And then there is a Rotary Club! Oh Boy!

'TWAS here they strangled Vercingetorix.
Here the Numidian tyrant, as the knot
Drew tighter, rolled his eyeballs scarlet-shot,
Shivered, and died, for all his politics.
And there are other names you ought to mix
With these, to show us that you know a lot,
But which unhappily you have forgot.
A memory will play a man such tricks,

Dull little guide who tread the Sacred Street,
Lying about your ancestors. God knows
His purposes. The she-wolf, I suppose,
Had she foreseen you and your shrugs and grins,
Forth from the suckling lips had drawn the teat,
And breakfasted in quiet on the twins.

BIOGRAPHY

MOSCHUS, who cannot sing, is chaunting
For poor old Bion, who could not sing,
For all his rubbish of white nymphs haunting
High sun-flushed summit and moss-cool spring.
I scarcely know of a sadder thing.

When he was living Moschus adored him,
As he adores him now that he's dead,
Though I'm perfectly certain that Bion bored him,
As he bored us all, if it must be said.
I have no doubt at all on that head.

Why will he wail of what Bion wasn't,
And never could hope in the world to be?
He could wrench my soul with the truth—but he doesn't
Affect my peace in the least degree.
His fervors stir not a pulse in me.

Poor real Bion that failed, and failing
Returned again to congenial dust,
Song was too much for you, unavailing
Your effort. They say that the Gods are just.
Moschus can't sing for you, and—I must.

AN AFTERNOON IN ARTILLERY WALK

(Mary Milton loquitur)

I THINK it is his blindness makes him so
He is so angry, and so querulous.
Yes, Father! I will look in Scaliger.
Yes, Cousin Phillips took the notes—I think—
May all the evil angels fly away
With Cousin Phillips to the Serbonian Bog,
Wherever that may be. And here am I
Locked in with him the livelong afternoon.
There's Anne gone limping with that love of hers,
Her master-carpenter, and Deborah
Stolen away. Yes, Father, 'tis an aleph
But the Greek glose on't in the Septuagint
Is something that I cannot quite make out.
The letter's rubbed.
  Oh, thus to wear away
My soul and body with this dry-as-dust
This tearer-up of words, this plaguey seeker
After the things that no man understands.
'Tis April. I am seventeen years old,
And Abram Clark will come a-courting me.
Oh what a Hell a midday house can be!
Dusty and bright and dumb and shadowless,
Full of this sunshot dryness, like the soul
Of this old pedant here. I will not bear
Longer this tyranny of death in life
That drains my spirit like a succubus.

I am too full of blood and life for this—
This dull soul-gnawing discipline he sets
Upon our shoulders, the sad characters.
Chapter on chapter, blank and meaningless.
Now by the May-pole merry-makers run,
And the music throbs and pulses in light limbs,
And the girls' kirtles are lifted to the knee.
Ah would that I were blowsy with the heat,
Being bussed by some tall fellow, and kissing him
On his hot red lips—some bully royalist
With gold in's purse and lace about his throat
And a long rapier for the Puritans.
Or I would wander by some cool yew-hedge,
Dallying with my lover all the afternoon,
And then to cards and supper—cinnamon,
Some delicate pastry, and an amber wine
Burning on these lips that know a year-long lent.
Then to the theatre, and Mistress Nell
That the king's fond of. Mayhap gentlemen
About would praise me, and I should hear them buzz,
And feel my cheek grow warm beneath my mask,
And glance most kindly ——
I was in a muse
I have the paper, father, and the pens.
Now for the damnable dictation. So!
"*High—on a throne—of royal state—*
which far
Outshone—the wealth of "Ormus"—S or Z?
How should I know the letter?—"*and of Ind.*
Or where—the gorgeous East—with richest hand
Showers—on her kings—barbaric—pearl and gold.
Satan exalted sate."

THE BANQUET OF THE POETS

O CAMBRIDGE, Cambridge! O John Harvard's City!
Of thee the song, though I'm no Cantabrigian.
Is there a theme more fruitful for the witty
This side that dolorous water men call Stygian?
Perhaps you'll miss my meaning, more's the pity,
Because I sing of art, which like religion
Is a topic that New England people ought
To dodge as tending to excess of thought.

'Tis a fair city. Many a pillared porch
And many a white-ribbed fan-light there is seen
Along the avenues where students scorch,
Fervid with intellect and gasoline,
Which latter feeds the flame of learning's torch
When Widow Nolen fails to intervene,
For they who seek that Prince of Interveners
Can pass exams like Sidises and Wieners.

'Tis a fair city—half our history hangs
Upon her fate in time past. Still she feels
The thrill of her great forefathers' harangues
Beat in her blood. Her steeples shake to peals
That clamored at our land's deliverance pangs.
And all her ancient beauty she reveals
When the yellow shower of sundown overwhelms
Her avenues of immemorial elms.

On such an evening in a stately chamber
Full of mahogany and sunlight soft,
Beside the window where the roses clamber,
A woman stood, who many a time and oft,
Had watched the golden light pale into amber,
Thence into brown. She touched her lip and coughed,
Not loudly, but as one about to mention
Something deserving somebody's attention.

She was not fair, yet there was something in
Her countenance. There usually is.
Her dress severe and dark matched well her mien
Which was not sad or glad. In Cambridge this
Is not peculiar. Her eyes were grayish green
And full of bottomless simplicities.
Some wrinkles round her mouth betrayed to view
That she was humorous and fifty-two

At least. But never carp at any age.
Though equably her silken bosom heaved,
Her mind might be as passionate a page
As yours or mine. She may have well achieved
Virtue and Victory to have engaged
Our praise, if all her secret we conceived.
But anyhow she said with decorous mien
And softly, "Tea is served, Miss Imogene."

Parted the portières, and a crowd came through
Behind the figure of their hostess, which
Showed like a peacock's 'mid a retinue
Of plymouth-rocks and guinea-fowl. An itch

Descriptive here afflicts me, though I do
Not deal in personalities "and sich."
Nevertheless I rather think I may
Indulge in panegyric by the way.

O Imogene! O graven Imagist!
Was it then thou, grey Fancy's strangest child?
Sweet Anarch, literary Nihilist
Thick warbling thy jaw-breaking woodnotes wild?
Was it then thou, delicious egotist?
Well of soft incoherence undefiled!
It was. It was, indeed. Indeed, it was
She who does nothing whatsoe'er she does,

Imogene herself—no other; and behind
Were half New England, half New Helicon,
Inextricably inwove and intertwined,
Puritan and Poet for the nonce at one,
For both delight in being wined and dined
As much as you and I have ever done.
So there were Russells, Lawrences and Abbots
And eighteen Coolidges and seven Cabots,

Discoursing sweet with them who below Par-
Nassus (far—far below) intone their ditties,
The ungirt children of the Morning Star,
Arensburgs, Kreymborgs, and Giovanittis,
Sandburgs who sing of God and Omaha,
Chicago, Alton and the Central cities,
And Indiana's offspring unsuppressed,
The Middle Classics of the Middle West.

And there Max Eastman came with Edgar Masters,
He the Spoon River Amorist, who vexes
With epigram and epitaph disasters
Such as arise from commerce of the sexes,
And shock the feelings of old maids and pastors,
Who (damn the accent!) suffer from complexes,
And, never having heard of Doctor Freud
Or Havelock Ellis either, are annoyed,

And Harriet Monroe, who would have been in clover,
But a spectrist rose before her like a spectre,
One of the twain who put that sad jest over,
And spilled the gall into her cup of nectar.
No woman wailing for her demon lover
Was sadder then. She could not resurrect her
Drear spirits from their dithyrambic tomb,
But stood there frowning, a prodigious gloom.

A Shelley with St. Vitus Dance and quinsey
Loped to the Hostess while they hesitated.
Then goldenly he spake. 'Twas Vachell Lindsay,
Whose every vowel is electroplated.
Sometimes he gilds, sometimes he merely tins. He
Has been a little overestimated,
But is a poet, I, for one, respect.
He spoke to Imogene to this effect:

"Oh, beautiful in bounty, ere I set
"My mind upon convivial delights,
"Celestial ichor in yon cellaret,
"Pray who is the young Harvard man who writes?

"Who is the Harvard Poet? I forget
"His name, and even the verses he indites.
"You said, if my impression is correct,
"He would tonight make one of the elect."

"Oh, the new protégé," the dame replied,
"He is a lad of infinite variety,
"Whom I endeavor in the main to guide
"On unknown paths of lettered notoriety.
"He said some function not to be denied,
"Held at his undergraduate society,
"Might make him late. I fear it has delayed
"That brow of ivory, that soul of jade."

Outspake the Spectrist: "I'm a Harvard man.
"I know the boy. I know where he resides
"On coasts of gold. I'll fetch him, if I can."
And forth he darted. While like fate he strides
Mount Auburn Street, according to my plan
(There is a plan) which properly provides
A dénouement appropriate to my story,
I shall reveal the poet in his glory.

Fast in his club, perhaps the A. D. Phi,
Possibly the Spee, it may be the Porcellian,
The poet stood with murder in his eye
And all the battailous aspect of rebellion.
He had some reasons you'll know bye and bye.
And one of them was better than a million.
Though it may bore you, I will take my chances,
Putting you au courant with the circumstances.

It seems there was a girl at Andover,
Exceeding pretty and exceeding prim.
He was tremendously épris of her.
Her fancy seemed more constant than a whim.
They had a tiff. He had not smoothed her fur,
And she had read the riot act to him.
At any rate they parted with some pain,
She to her room, and he to the Touraine.

There fifteen cocktails in a swift succession
Worked a considerable transformation.
Not that he sorrowed over his transgression.
Not so! his grief grew into irritation,
When suddenly there entered a procession
Of students full of beer and jubilation,
Who bade him forthwith purchase the regalia
Suitable for that evening's saturnalia,

Which was to be one of those costumed riots,
In which a university delights,
And oft the local citizen disquiets
When the huge athlete in a show-girl's tights
Ramps in the hula-hula. I don't deny its
Striking effects—the blaze of strontium lights
Upon barbaric raiment and gay faces
Of hot young devils going their own paces,

Is pleasant to remember. But good Lord!
While it was happening, what infernal bore!
Stupid as rhetoric, or Henry Ford
Upon the Revolutionary War,

Or other topic. Always I abhorred
The crowd, and still like Horace I abhor.
The reason in strict truth I ought to mention.
I find it hard to capture their attention.

The Poet, roused from wrathful ponderings,
Departed swiftly to a Hebrew Jew's
Costume emporium, who dealt in many things,
Nor was long pondering where was much to choose,
But took Dan Cupid's guise, pink tights, gilt wings,
And yellow wig, because they met his views,
The costume by itself was nothing much.
A fig-leaf would have been a graceful touch.

Fast in his club, my hero, as I stated
Five stanzas back, stood or was rather swaying,
For fifteen cocktails duly concentrated
Affect a man, which there is no gainsaying.
He was stripped naked, and he contemplated
Reproachfully the tights he was essaying.
The wig and wings were on, but his mind was centered
Upon the tights, what time the Spectrist entered.

The Spectrist had not in the least expected
A spectacle quite so spectacular.
All things seemed wonderfully unconnected.
He dropped the image of a mild cigar.
His laughter was for once as unaffected
As any drummer's in a smoking-car,
When comrades of two-hour companionships
Swap dirty yarns over the poker-chips.

It's bad to fall into intoxication,
But worse to give a drunken mind direction.
The Spectrist's voice recalled the invitation
Home to the Poet's deadened recollection.
Suddenly to the Spectrist's consternation
Out of the room he ran like an infection,
Or a greyhound, or the Calydonian Boar,
Or the Penn. Limited before the War.

The club door slammed behind him. Into the street,
Over a fence, and through a little park
He ran. His tinsel pinions flapped and beat
'Neath the blue blaze of the electric arc,
And lightning swift pelted his naked feet.
He gleamed all rose and ivory and stark,
Incomparable for speed, and light as air,
Right into the arms of W-ll--m R-sc-- Th-y-r

And Barrett W-nd-ll, who, through Cambridge mud
Homeward returning from a club, beheld
A portent golden-winged, of flesh and blood,
So real it effectually dispelled
Thought and high converse. Paralysed they stood
So vast a tide of new emotions swelled
Within them silent. Then as sages will,
"My God!" said W-nd-ll, "did you see it, Bill?

"I thought it was the ghost of my dead youth—
"Happily dead perhaps, but still my own—
"Awful with the simplicity of truth,
"And rather high in blood if not in tone,

"When every molar was a dulcet tooth,
"And love rose-crowned sate on his purple throne,
"With more details I shan't elaborate."
Said Th-y-r: "It was an undergraduate.

"All the Colonial Club shall hear of this,
"And rumor with her thousand tongues run mad.
"Strong men will weep that they this scene did miss,
"And gently grinning show a semblance sad.
"And graceless bards will weave base fantasies
"Concerning that intolerable young cad,
"Of whose expulsion I am quite as sure
"As that I wrote the epic of Cavour."

Oh that John Masefield's muse who sang Saul Kane
Moved in my soul with preternatural power,
Firing that incombustible my brain
With the glories of the liberated hour.
I cannot sing like that, but won't complain,
And will not even say the grapes are sour.
I should be well enough contented with
Kipling's immortal touch in "Brugglesmith."

So fearing with the Preacher what is high—
Too high for me—my gadding tale returns
To constellations of a lowlier sky
Whose light with less austere effulgence burns.
Imogene's guests, their throats no longer dry,
Had tilted over conversation's urns.
Words rushed unto the face without control.
There was in fact an overflow of soul.

Sex was the subject they had pitched upon.
With M-st-rs there, of course it had to be.
Lindsay in vain put the soft pedal on.
For he was int'rested in poetry.
They sang of chromosomes in unison,
Like morning-stars of Physiology,
Sex being a theme that fascinates and perplexes,
As Sterne remarks, "old women of both sexes."

Dispassionately, of course, they spoke of passions,
And without prejudice of prejudices,
Of the insufficiency of sexual rations,
And what abominable injustice this is,
And what's the matter with the moral fashions
That damn a mother who is not a Mrs.,
Though there is sometimes justice in that other
Which damns a Mrs. who is not a mother.

The handmaid whom I introduced at first
Stood where the coffee-urn diffused its fume.
Her intellect was by no means the worst
Of those then present in that stately room.
While ministering to hunger and to thirst,
She felt oppressed by a material gloom,
For nothing else produces such oppression
As lengthy talk on amorous obsession.

The conversation had indeed a savor
That rather set on edge her wisdom teeth.
All told 'twas of the rotten peach's flavor.
She thought how playing on her native heath,

She turned a stone that would have pleased a paver,
And found a thriving colony beneath
Of ordure-colored, slime-engendered slugs,
Many-limbed worms, and little loathsome bugs.

This seemed a lively image to her mind
(It is in fact good imagistic style,
Except that here and there the rhyme-words bind
The thought together every little while,
And that a metre of a certain kind
Is followed by my verses versatile)
I say this worm's nest seemed a lively image
Of what she heard in that oracular scrimmage.

For everything in damp decay that squirms,
Free love, free verse, free bunkum, burgeoned out.
And spirochetae mixed with biosperms
Enflamed the imagination past a doubt,
With rafts of pseudo-scientific terms,
And birth-control, about it and about.
Their talk to her seemed neither neat nor gaudy.
She darkly knew that they were "talking bawdy,"

As a clean country girl on a strange street
Passing by chance a woman of the town,
Painted for piracy, and perfumed sweet
As cheap cologne can make her, with her gown
Cut to the bosom-cleft, to sketch complete
The minor earmarks of her ill renown,
Knows somehow, though experience be but recent,
That the bright stranger's not exactly decent.

My heroine was nursed in old beliefs
That, it may be, have quite played out their part.
The kind of book she read was "Scottish Chiefs."
"Lucile" to her was the high pitch of art.
Her favorites dealt in obvious joys and griefs.
She knew a lot of Thomas Moore by heart.
Compared with Cubist bards, it may be stated
That she was rather highly educated.

And hence it was she found the conversation
Not only quite unprofitable but dull
As Doctor Nordau on degeneration,
Or Bosanquet upon the Beautiful,
Or the "Jew Republic," or the "German Nation"
Which weekly strive the public leg to pull.
Briefly my handmaid heroine was fed up,
But still she passed the tarts and held her head up.

A Birth-Controller, getting half the floor
With much ado away from a free-verser
Who had occupied the better part before,
Announced herself the prophet and precursor
Of a new age when cant should be no more,
And cheated nature at last should reimburse her-
Self for the loss of her peculiar treasure
By long, long draughts against the bank of pleasure.

"Clothes gave us shame," said she, "unnatural shame.
"We must destroy the tyranny of clothes.
"Carlyle was right. Trousers are much to blame,
"As also skirts, the which our nature loathes.

"Let us redeem the perfect human frame,
"Swearing to set it free with mighty oathes."
She beat her bosom, which appeared to be
Flat as the level of democracy.

But e'er she could continue, from the throng
Up in rebuttal sprang Professor Lowes.
"Although your arguments," he said, "are strong
"Still polyphonic prose is simply—prose.
"Free verse is but the shadow of a song,
"Though sham sham sham and pose repose on pose,
"Though Greenwich Village pillage still in gutters,
"Though Arensburg believe what Kreymborg utters.

"Not Gods, not men, not literary column
"Can e'er eternize the poetic cootie.
"But I opine Miss Lowell's latest volume
"Has elements of an enduring beauty.
"The bare perusal always makes me solemn."
(The publishers have made his phrase do duty.
They advertised it with consummate art
In the Nation's only interesting part.)

The Birth-Controller cried: "For liberty
"Against tradition's moral usurpation
"The time has come to make a plangent plea.
"There must be a campaign of education,
"Aimed full at overbearing modesty,
"And clothes, and their indecent occultation.
"Wipe out the infamy, which means the prude.
"Sartor Resartus—nudity renewed!"

The handmaid heard these things her place commanding
That "sea of eloquence" from shore to shore.
Further she heard swift feet upon the landing
That lay beyond. The glass knob of the door
Turned with great vigor, and her understanding
Reeled as with mal de mer, for right before,
Against the outer darkness of the hall
A figure stood with no clothes on at all,

Bright-winged and yellow-haired. A kind of spell
Held her an instant. Could these be realities?
She looked again. Again she saw him well—
Youth with eyes full of powers and principalities
And thrones and lesser attributes of Hell,
Rebel desires and hackneyed bestialities.
In short he was the very symbol of
Anything that's free, verse, alcohol, or love.

She shrieked. All turned. The poet, with a yell
Like that which tore Hell's concave, onward sprang.
With emphasis on every syllable,
"I'm a drunken angel," he bellowed and he sang,
"I'm a fa-fallen angel," and he fell
Face down on the waxed walnut with a bang.
Falling he caught the Birth-Controller's gown,
And in a common ruin dragged her down.

The rest is silence more or less, I'm told.
Next day the waiting maid whom I admire
Gave up her place. She said she was too old
To learn new tricks—she couldn't play with fire

With any comfort. She would be so bold
As to think she had been worthy of her hire.
She hoped Miss Imogene wouldn't take offence,
And would perhaps give her a reference.

The poet was expelled and nothing said.
Mount Auburn Street that joins two burial-grounds,
One for the quick and the other for the dead,
Knew him no more upon his casual rounds.
The dust of Harvard from his feet he shed.
Westward he went where energy abounds,
And speculators sell to you and me
Town lots at the bottom of the Salton Sea.

But I have seen him at the fall of night
When purple mountains heighten in the gloam,
And the summits glare with amethystine light,
And rattling tractors yank the gangplows home,
In the room where he is used to read and write
Pluck from the wall a polyphonic tome,
And smile at lines devoid of sense or scansion
With a gay air of—shall I say expansion?

SIX LONG HOURS IN LOS ANGELES

SIX long hours in Los Angeles! oh, my God!
What have I done that this should come to me,
Or I to this? What black iniquity
Sits on my soul, as heavy as a hod?
In depths of triple darkness have I trod,
But did not know abysms like this could be,
Horror on horror piled illimitably.
Thy glory is departed Ichabod.

And what shall it avail me now I pray
That once I strove with beasts in Omaha,
Billings, Mobile, Detroit, et cetera?
All is around me confusion and a blur.
I hear thy liquid accents, Ioway,
And see such blondes as gentlemen prefer.

A CONCERT

THERE are fifty million dollars in the room.
The splendid bellow of the barytone
Smites on a note to topple down a throne,
Mussorgsky boding forth an empire's doom.
There is lava in that song that can consume
Wild nations, and artillery's rhythmic drone,
Rebellion yelling, and wild trumpets blown,
And a blood-boltered Tsar dragged to the tomb.

So all the bare-backed women sigh applause,
Silk rustles, and the diamond collars glint,
And vacant eyes smile wide, as if no hint
Of horror hung upon the resonant air,
Of white throats cut, perhaps, not without cause.
It must be fun to be a millionaire.

A COLONIAL SONG FOR THE OPENING OF COLLEGE

THE leaf of the maple is red again,
That flames in the Witch's Wood.
And there is a whisper in my brain,
A tingle in my blood.

My brothers are welcome to all my Greek,
Though it be not a scholar's store,
And, save for Horace, I care not a leek
If none know Latin more.

Saith the proverb to every dog his day,
So, while I have gullet and lungs,
I'll sing, may the devil carry away
The Greek and the Roman Tongues.

Logic how shall I understand,
Or text expound and declare,
If I kiss Mehitabel Chauncey's hand,
And see the sun in her hair.

To Grammar and Syntax I wish bad luck,
And to all on that path who plod.
I know a place where a man may pluck
Blue aster and goldenrod.

COLORADO MORTON'S RIDE *

COLORADO MORTON'S riding far.
He won't be back with the Circle-Bar.
The Boss he sent him in to town
To ship the last of the longhorns down,
Although he hadn't no business head,
And it was the turn of me or Red.
So Colorado Morton run them brutes
Down the Dead Horse from the Coyote Buttes,
And three days later delivered them steers
To the Boss's agent, which his name was Beers.
And he was a shiftless no 'count clerk
That didn't have nothing to do but shirk.
He says to Colorado, he says: "Old pard,
"Here's a wire for you. You sign the card.
"You pen your cattle, and sit on your tail,
"For the West-bound limited's jumped the rail."
Colorado Morton he read his wire,
Which would make a better man than him perspire,
It wouldn't give no pleasure to you and me.
It come from his sister up in B. C.:
"My husband's hanging, and it should be you
"And God forgive you. Sister Lou."
And she told him where the hanging was at,
Day after termorrer at Medicine Hat.
Colorado Morton hadn't meant no harm.
There was a shindy up at Broken Arm.

* Written in collaboration with Rivers S. Browne.

Him and his brother-in-law Jim Graeme
Were sitting in at a poker-game,
And a dirty Swede of a lumber-jack
Dealt himself three aces from under the pack.
I never held with the blame Canucks,
They sure are a bunch of ornery bucks.
And one thing's certain as Hell. They ain't
Got no respect for a sinner or a saint.
If any killing you happen to have done,
By God they'll hang you, sure as a gun,
Unless you can put it in evidence
The aforesaid killing was in self-defence.
And self-defence is a damn poor name
For a row that started in a poker-game.
Jim Graeme was there you bet your tooting,
But Colorado Morton done the shooting.
Burk Hyne of the mounted police butts in,
And the boys skinned out and rode like sin,
And cutting the corners mighty fine,
They just got over the Idaho line.
Jim Graeme fer a month or so he played
Around with the boys till the dust had laid.
But Mort, as soon as he got across,
Settled down punching steers for the Boss.
He done his job like a puncher should.
But the valves in his heart weren't never no good.
And he used to pant in the mountain air,
And he used to cuss, and he used to swear.
And whenever his pony would buck or jump,
His heart would hammer and his heart would thump.

But just the same old Mort was a star,
And the best horse-wrangler in the Circle-Bar.
Now Mort when he read that telegram through,
He sure was a puzzled buckeroo.
He says to Beers: "You son of a gun
"Why didn't you send it to me on the run?
"You send me a wire to Medicine Hat,
"And tell 'em I'm coming and that is that."
And Beers he answers: "The wires is down,
"And ye can't get a telegram out of town."
"My God," says Morton, "They'll hang poor Jim.
"If he is Lou's husband, I'm fond of him.
"I do not savvy a job of this style,
"And it's every inch of two hundred mile."
And Beers he says: "It's one Hell of a ride.
"You'll never make it, and you'll hang beside."
But Colorado Morton he says: "Good night!
"All I care is are the cinches tight."
And away he gallops up the yaller hill,
While his heart it hammered and his heart stood still.
That doggone cayuse was a good mustang.
And he must have figured that his boss would hang,
But anyhow he ate up the flat,
Stretching away for Medicine Hat.
That doggone cayuse was doggone tired
When they hit the border beyond Fort Bayard.
The sweat was running on every hair,
And it didn't do Mort no good to swear.
Men will keep going on their nerve or their head,
But you cannot ride a horse when he's dead.

And Colorado Morton couldn't ride
That doggone cayuse after it died.
And there he was on the edge of the snow,
With a hundred and twenty miles to go.
But he looks and he sees a camp-fire shine
A thousand feet below timber-line.
And he says: "I'll hump it down and see,
"If those blighters will lend a horse to me.
"If they haven't a pony, I guess I'm stung
"And poor Jim Graeme is due to get hung.
"Which upon my honor he never should
"With me alive and the hanging so good."
And down he come while the night was falling,
Down the side of the cañon, slipping and crawling.
And he seed a red jacket hanging on the pole,
And it was the mounted police patrol,
And he seed the yaller chevron shine.
It was Mr. mounted policeman Hyne.
And "Hyne," says Morton, "Jimmy Graeme
"Is going to swing for that poker game.
"You come in late, and you never seed
"That I was the guy that shot the Swede.
"My doggone cayuse's tire's gone flat.
"And I got to get to Medicine Hat.
"I got to get there tomorrer by one,
"Or he'll hang at two as sure as a gun."
And Hyne he says: "Well I'll be shot.
"You sure must like Jim Graeme a lot.
"Climb on my buckskin and hit the trail,
"And my very best wishes when you get to jail."

"And Mort," he says, "By the Perkins Slough
"There's a horse herd will be some use to you.
"There's a salt-lick there, and my buck's no 'count.
"And if he plays out you can catch a mount.
"I'll give you supper here, if you like.
"But if you don't then for God's sake hike."
That yaller buckskin he played up fine.
He wasn't no 'count in spite of Hyne.
He slid down the hill as smooth as a tile,
And over the flat for sixty mile.
But sixty mile is the end of power,
When a horse goes eighteen miles an hour.
And when he come to the Perkins Slough,
Mort picked up a horse-trail spandy-new.
And all alone 'neath the morning-star
The best horse-wrangler of the Circle-Bar
Caught the bunch in a cotton-wood tangle,
And wrangled the last horse he'd ever wrangle.
I seen the brute later, and I've heard tell
His sire was a stud-horse in the teams of Hell—
A four-year-old stallion built like a crane,
Thin as a spit of the Bad Lands rain.
His bones stuck out all over his nibs.
That horse wan't nothing but hocks and ribs.
But I know horses, and I'll tell you this.
A thin devil's worse than a fat devil is.
He wouldn't do nothing but stand on his ear,
And buck and sidewind, and pitch, and rear.
Colorado Mort got pretty well plastered,
But somehow or other he beat that bastard.

Now I seen Vampa doing his dance,
But Vampa to him wan't a circumstance.
He was young, and friendly, and tender, and true
Beside that beast in the Perkins Slough.
Colorado Mort was hard to pile.
It was one long sidewind for sixty mile.
It was hammer and slam, and crash and pound,
And a buck at every hole in the ground.
And the big jack-rabbits streaked over the level,
As they seed a man come riding the Devil,
Riding the Devil, and standing pat
All the way into Medicine Hat.
Colorado Morton stuck to that tramp,
Like an extra-special-delivery stamp.
And at quarter to twelve, as bold as brass,
Sidewound in "The City of Natural Gas."
And he come to the Judge, and "Judge," says he,
"About this Broken Arm shiveree.
"Them witnesses is a lousy breed,
"For I was the guy that shot the Swede."
The judge looks up in a casual way:
"You say you shot him? The Hell you say!"
"Yes," says Mort, "If it's all the same,
"You'd better hang me instead of Jim Graeme."
And his heart it hammered, and his heart it hopped,
And he said, "I got here," and his blame heart stopped.
That judge was always a square old porpoise.
He issued a writ of Habeas Corpus,
Which wasn't no good, because Jim Graeme
Got shot next week in a poker-game.

And everyone said it was tough on Lou
To lose her brother and her husband too.
The mounted police thought Mort was a sport,
And they all chipped in for a stone for Mort.
And they cut this epitaph on the stone:
"He travels the farthest who travels alone."
Alone he travelled, and he travelled far.
He won't be back with the Circle-Bar.

THE BALLAD OF ANGEL MAY*

IF YOU will listen, I'll say my say
About a lady. Her name was May.
And she was pretty and she was limber,
But the Marshal run her out of Big Timber,
And from what she said and done that day,
I reckon they called her Angel May.
Her hair was red and her eyes was blue.
But I wouldn't go with her if I was you.
And if I did, I wouldn't go far.
You take it from the Boss of the Circle-Bar.
With a broken arm he hit Blue Flat,
When May blew by in her Stetson hat,
Painted and powdered, and a sight to see,
And "Boss," she says, "Take a whirl with me."
And the Boss he says, "No, May my girl,
My arm is bruk, and I cannot whirl."
Which proves a fellow don't know his luck
Sometimes, even if his arm is bruk.
"Who's running your beef-herd now?" says May.
Says the Boss: "That piker is Frank McCrea.
"His legs is putty. His head is bone.
"But I got some trailhands from San Antone.
"You come from somewhere down that way.
"I think I heerd so, Angel May."
But May she answered in high disdain,
"You think so? Take a think again."

*Written in collaboration with Rivers S. Browne.

Now the Boss's arm was hurtin' him bad,
Or he'd ha' noticed why May was mad.
For the only boy in the world for May
Was that pie-faced loafer Frank McCrea.
And every one in the whole North West
Knew Frank was an ornery cattle-pest.
And I've hern tell that further South
The Greasers call him "Foot and Mouth."
He couldn't rope and he couldn't ride.
He hadn't the guts of a man inside.
He couldn't brand or cut or shoot,
But he drew an ace right smart from his boot.
Which don't prove nothing at all, becuz
Frank was a devil with women, he wuz.
They fell for him white and Cree and Sioux,
And Angel May she fell for him too.
And he was a regular song and dance.
And the sun it rose on the seat of his pants.
All her earnings, every cent,
On that low-life buckeroo she spent,
For all the licker that he could hold,
And that dirty loafer quit her cold.
And she hadn't seen him for nigh two years,
And here he was running the Boss's steers,
Eating overtime, riding slow,
Pushing the herd from Mexico.
Now Angel May didn't wait no more.
The lights was burning in the "Matador,"
Montana laying its aces down,
For half of Texas had come to town.

The drinks was flowing in that den of vice.
I ought to know. I got shot there twice.
And there was the trapper Two-Dot Jones,
Hitting the red-eye, rolling the bones.
She looks at the gang. "Two-Dot," says she,
"Come here, old timer, and talk with me.
"Two-Dot, I know I done you dirt,
"But you don't want May to come to no hurt.
"Get me a horse, and get me away.
"I must see that piker, Frank McCrea.
"I know he's a half-breed. I ain't no star.
"We hit the trail for the Circle-Bar."
Now I never heard no other report,
Two-Dot Jones was a game old sport.
Three days they rode. They hit the fourth
The trail of the beef-herd travelling North.
And through the shadow and the night a-falling
They heard the jingle of the bells calling,
Heard 'em jingle near and far,
The cavallarda of the Circle-Bar.
She fussed a lot, did Angel May,
Over that piker Frank McCrea.
She gave him the rough side of her tongue,
But you should have seed the whiskey she brung.
There was sure enough to drown the house.
And the whole damn' camp was one big souse.
And Frank McCrea got more'n his share,
Which he wouldn't have done, if the Boss was there.
But the Boss by that was a damn, sick man
With a broken arm in Bozeman.

With his head in her lap, Frank's snoring hard.
It came to the change of the cattle-guard.
He never shifted, he never stirred.
In came Kid Angel from riding herd.
He looks at May, an' he says: "Good night!
There'll be some shooting soon as there's light.
Tomorrow it's me for the Rio Grand',
And Frank, I reckon for the Promised Land.
He's going to drink just one drink more
Before he starts for the Golden Shore."
And he put a bottle careful by,
For he wouldn't be mean and send him dry.
He rolled in his blanket. And Angel May
Held Frank's head in her lap till day.

Just before sun-up Coyote Joe
Blew in. Says May, "Has Frank a show?"
"A chance," says Joe, "But I'm no liar,
"Same as a snow-ball in Hell-fire.
"The Kid can shoot a bug off the limb.
" 'Bat' Masterson has nothing on him."

And up the sun come, glum and pale,
And the boys is singing "The Chisholm Trail,"
And chewing his lip, and mad to let drive,
Kid Angel's playing with his forty-five.

And the liquor's burning in Frank McCrea.
And I never want to fight his way.
And she says to him: "McCrea, you're tight.
"Pull yourself together. You got to fight."
An' he says, "Where?" An' she says: "Right here!
"For this Kid Angel is my brother dear.

"An' he says he'll get you too, by damn,
Because you made me what I am."
And Frank McCrea, he gets to his feet,
And his hands are shaking an' he's white as a sheet.
Kid Angel's looking mighty mean,
And he says, "You swine! I'll drill you clean."
Coyote Joe is bossing the show.
He's raised his hand and raring to go.
Frank's head is shaking, and the sweat it run
Down the face of that son-of-a-gun.
The Kid he whipped his gun up spry.
But Angel May heaved her hat in his eye.
He flinched an inch, and the shot went wild,
That May was sure a mischievous child.
And Frankie's bullet, straight and true,
Split the Kid's wish-bone right in two.
The Kid he dropped. And "May," says he,
"He's drilled me clean. The joke's on me.
"He's the worst shot I ever saw.
"But give my love to Paw and Maw.
"Skin out before this show gets pinched.
"I don't want no sister of mine to get lynched.
"You skip away with Frank McCrea,
"And damn you anyhow Angel May."

ON BEING QUIZZED BY BALIEV

IN WHAT strange land, incomparable buffoon,
Have you been impresario? I protest
I know that accent and that turn of jest,
Those features of a serio-comic moon,
Those blunt brows, by a cubist sculptor hewn,
Unwinking eyes, still roving without rest
Full of quaint malice not to be repressed,
That voice like the low notes of a bassoon.

Oh well—too well—have I beheld that smile
Somewhere ere this, the passionless derision,
Real and momentary as a vision.
Where was it you performed the self-same rôle,
While I fled trembling up an endless aisle
In the queer theatre of my own soul.

THE REALIST

I WILL not dream about ideal things,
Having such eyes as may consider truth,
That flies on her plain customary wings
Beyond the highest reverie of youth.

I have seen beauty living, palpitating,
That the mind's vain creation overwhelms—
The tanager with his green mistress mating,
Grosbeaks in golden light in Concord elms,

In human faces passion past all naming,
No poet ever yet was fit to dream,
The actuality of glory, shaming
The imagined light, the visionary gleam.

Give me but this, if I must make decision.
I will keep beauty. You may have your vision.

AN UNANSWERED QUESTION

I HAVE heard whispers that I cannot speak,
Melodies, whose uncapturable tone
Drifted by starlight out of the unknown,
And left me shaken with beauty, and faint and weak.
And in the midnight when the timbers creak
Dreams have possessed me, greater than my own,
And in my solitary heart alone
I have seen grails I never will dare seek.

Why thunder the incalculable wings
About me so, if I am not to fly?
Why do the voices yet within me cry
Melodious? Why do the wild lights gleam,
And spill strange beauty over common things?
I am not visionary. Do I dream?

NIGHT LAUGHTER

IN THE gray solitudes,
When night was falling,
Far in the autumn woods
A loon was calling,

Uttering what distress,
To what replying;
Alone in the wilderness
The voice of one crying.

Fairer because of thee,
How hath the moon
Won this new majesty,
Oh moaning loon?

TROUBLE

WOULD there were music that would come like calm
Into this trouble, some clear, tenuous strain,
As simple and majestic as a psalm
That eased the tragic ancient of his pain.

Oh for a colonnade, far off, withdrawn
Whence I might glimpse, rigid against the foam
Of sunrise, spires commercing with the dawn,
Or some triumphant curvature of dome.

Beautiful things, men make to make the heart
Take heart, come in a dream and are suspect.
Beauty is dying to herself apart.
The gleams of her can only resurrect

A perishing vision, failing, and a cold
Light of departing that we cannot hold.

AN ENCOUNTER

"I met Lewis Carroll the author of Alice in Wonderland."—The Heart of Emerson's Journals.

I

HERE is pure transcendentalism carried
To logical conclusions by a mind,
Which is, perhaps, a thought too much refined
By mathematics elegant and arid.
No Bruce in stranger Abyssinias tarried.
No Franklin wilder coasts set out to find
Than this queer don, queerest of all don-kind,
To nonsense morganatically married.

Concord has naught like this. And I surmise
Will always feel a certain want and lack.
We know strange matters, but we need a knack
Of seeing subtleties with a wild smile
Of unembarrassed gaiety in our eyes,
That justifiably might shock Carlyle.

II

Perhaps too mimsy and a trifle mome
From pondering the riddle of the sphinx.
He's a peculiar cup from which one drinks
A curious wine that bubbles with strange foam.

With mysteries he's much too much at home.
Yet, in a fashion of his own, he thinks,
And timid beauty 'mid his verses slinks,
Light footed, through the heavy-sounding tome.

I like his smile and his queer awkward face.
His Doric language has the art to please
Persons of greater elegance and ease,
Whose gay intelligence no dogma blunts.
I grant him humor and provincial grace.
And what a boojum is the snark he hunts!

PORTRAIT OF MY MASTER—HENRY AUGUSTINE BEERS

FIVE o'clock, and the gladiator sleeper
Turns in his doze, while like an etcher's jewel
That voice graves on the mind strokes kind or cruel:
"Richardson (with an owl-blink) was a *creeper.*"
"Byron's Parnassus was not high, but steeper
"Than Shelley's." "There's an atmosphere of gruel
"And dressing-gowns round Cowper." So the duel
With dullness goes. The half-back slumbers deeper.

But I remember an ambrosial night,
When sick at heart I sought him. How benign
He was. He talked of worlds that were not mine,
Emerson and Thoreau whom we do not know.
That worn old man—And yet I thought of white
Arbutus, and stone walls where blue flags grow.

POSSESSION

I LIKE unlettered mountains, all unknown
To poets, where no piping capriped
Repeats a borrowed song, while softly tread
The nymphs that love the dark stream or the stone.
I want an animism of my own.
What were those strange and lovely things that fled
As I glanced up? What that primeval dread
I felt in the spiritual waste alone?

Appear, take shape and substance. I evoke
Your presence out of the uncharméd rock
That no magician yet had skill to mock
With hackneyed spells. The spirit of the peak
Rosy with dusk possesses me. The oak
Quivers with a wild meaning. Speak to me—speak.

THE DEATH OF THE HERO

I SAW the hero riding, golden-haired,
To victory, clothed in valor and in power.
I launched the mistletoe in the black hour.
Valhalla trembled at the deed I dared.
I fell with glorious Baldur, and despaired
With Loki quivering 'neath the poison-shower,
And saw the crowd of gods shudder and cower
Where the cold eyes of the loosed serpent glared

Through the dust of Ragnarok. The coiling snake
Is in me too—and Freya's loveliness,
And Thor the hammer-shaker. I confess
The theft of Niblung gold. The dragon-guard
Crawled from my entrails, grieving for the sake
Of the strong Siegfried dying, evil-starred.

GILBERT WHITE MEDITATES AT SELBORNE

ONE watches, to no purpose, I suppose,
And yet I cannot give the watching o'er.
One step beyond my doorway, nay! one look
Up from my papers, and the charm begins
Its wayward magic on me—a circle drawn
About me wide as all the universe,
While I sit captivated, not by thought,
But things that throng the channels of the sense;
The sunny green veiling the silver limbs
Where on the upland hangs my well-loved crowd
Of beeches, loveliest of all forest trees;
The marsh where newts breed, and our peasants find
Coins with the Cæsars' superscript and sign.
Why do such things engage me?—trifling still,
Playing with facts as children sift the sand
Through their small fingers—yet I do find things
Memorable indeed. Was I not first to mark
Hedge-sparrows flirt their wings in breeding-time?
Who noted first the black-cap's double chant,
That, fluttering, pipes so deep, so loud, and wild,
Then, sitting calmly to engage in song,
Pours forth a sweet but inward melody?
Somehow that is important. Barrington
Is half aware of it. Who else but I?
Those great men up in London think a bird
Is but a bird. If in my darkened mind,

It be not, ah! so much more, what strange madness
Has overta'en one country curate more?
We are too civilized. These elegant times
Have sold some birth-right. The golden-crested wren
Tells me of that somehow, as if between
Two halves of mine own nature, separated
By an unbridgeable chasm, the bright thing flew,
To lead me to a strangeness in myself,
Regions I wish to tread, tropical worlds,
Electric with a life I wish to feel.
They say the swallows sleep all winter long,
Conglobulated in our ponds. I dream
A stranger thing, what palm-crowned Cape de Verde
They glide to through blue air over blue seas.
And I have made migration in myself,
Mysterious, in pursuit of those small wings,
And found Americas, Caribbean isles,
And vasty rivers of the Amazons.
"Radit iter liquidum," what says the Poet?
She skims the liquid pathway—"Celeres
"Neque commovet alas,"—nor moves her rapid wings.
Virgil, too, had his inner continent,
Or he had not drawn the swift bird-flight so well.
What Atlantéan world!
  My letter? The post?
I had forgot Daines Barrington almost.

THE MOUND-BUILDERS

I CHOOSE a valley of the Middle West
For the setting of my story. For the time
It starts as eighteen-ninety passes crest
And oak-trees yellow at a touch of rime,
And spell of Indian Summer unexpressed
Dies while the pumpkins ripen, and sublime
Visions of decay oppress the intellect,
Poor beauty with mortality infect.

Out of a pyre of fiery oak and maple
Rose Conway College's Neo-Gothic spires,
Red brick, of course, for red brick is the staple
The eighteen-ninety mise-en-scéne requires.
The sun was setting, and purple more than papal
Bathed the brash turrets, while benignant fires
Glanced on green copper finials, or slept
On the blue slates where ampelopsis crept.

Young Doctor Prescott drank the ample air
Of the soft Autumn, and watched the webs of rose
Hung in the West. A tang was everywhere
Of gusts approaching whence the Chinook blows.
Frost underneath you on rising moon would glare,
The lovely enfant perdu of the snows,
Beauty o'erthrowing beauty. With a sigh
He stood to watch the Western pageant die.

Voices cut through the soft dusk from the glen
Where to itself the little stream conversed.
Followed by a drum-like thudding sound. And then
Up from the meadow a dark object burst,
And, like a planet swum into his ken,
In a great arc the flaming sky traversed,
Reached a vast height, and, plunging to the ground,
Gave forth anew the thudding drum-like sound.

"Well, that's enough," a voice cried. There appeared
Two stalwart striplings heavy-built and tall.
One, golden-headed, with a ruddy beard,
Under his arm-pit, hugged a Rugby-ball.
Professor Prescott eyed them as they neared,
And smiled a greeting. He could not recall
Their names, but knew them for ingenuous asses
Who made sad work of Horace in his classes.

The shorter of the twain was black-avized,
With a cleft chin and an imperious eye,
With something only semi-civilized
About his look, you could not quite say why.
As he gazed at him, Prescott was well apprised
That, howso hard a classicist might try,
There was something in that brain's integument
No Latin verse would ever circumvent.

Sheepish the twain regarded their mild shepherd,
Although the dark-eyed elder of the two
Looked far less like a sheep than like a leopard,
With a queer contemptuous glance, as if he knew

How hot the burning dish of life is peppered
With what disastrous spice. Black flame shone through
His burning eye-balls. For all his youth, a grim
Immalleable hardness ruled in him.

But he said, "Good evening," pleasantly enough,
As Prescott struggled to recall his name,
And his blond companion threw a painful bluff
At nonchalance, while blushes went and came
Across his Nordic cheek. Though big and tough,
He was shyer than a school-girl just the same,
And knew that awe with which the Middle West
Once viewed Professors whatever they professed.

The dark-eyed, with a half glance at the blush
That lit his comrade's visage like a flame,
Explained to Prescott: "I am centre-rush.
"Anderson's full-back. Tomorrow there's a game
"With Gambier College—Yes Sir, I'm Jack Lush.
"I guess you think our Latin's pretty lame.
"We know some foot-ball even if we are thick.
"And Anderson at any rate can kick."

Relieved they walked away, while Prescott went
To see what first had drawn him to the spot,
Namely a tract of woodland white-oak sprent,
Which real estate promoters called a lot—
A term he hated. Dreamily he spent
The Autumn twilight while white Venus shot
Her Western silver. His dreams were quiet, but
Hinged on a nice girl in Connecticut—

A girl so nice that she was coming West
When the green bud should sweeten the New Year,
And full of charm that cannot be expressed,
Except in dreams the secret heart holds dear.
And he was soon to feather her a nest
By that sweet glen where the gay stream ran clear.
He cherished visions it was good to rouse
Of a small cottage set in dogwood boughs.

No wonder then if Autumn afternoon
And diademed twilight found him wandering there,
Dreaming 'neath a soft planet in a swoon
Upon the couches of the amorous air,
Or if those football-players struck a tune
That jangled with his dream of otherwhere.
Still, he reflected, they were only boys
Whose natural rights were dirt and sweat and noise.

He even thought of his own college green
Where not ten seasons earlier even he
Himself had been an actor in a scene
In the same style. The tragi-comedy
Of sport he knew, and all that it must mean
To Anderson and Lush. And sympathy
For their young notions in his spirit came,
And he resolved to see tomorrow's game.

With the next dawn the Indian summer died.
The day came robed in dun and over-cast.
A killing frost was o'er the country-side.
A breeze from the North-West grew to a blast.

Snow-flurries hastened by with angry stride,
But here and there the "wrapped enthusiast"
Fought his way to a cow-field through the storm,
Stamping his feet in the effort to keep warm.

There over night had risen two white goals,
Lonely that towered out of the iron ground,
And breathing stream, perhaps two hundred souls
Stood patiently, or sadly wandered round.
Most of the watchers hunted out their holes
Ere the last hero of the day was downed.
Enthusiasm often loses hold
Upon the spirit if the feet are cold.

Still Prescott thought it was a gallant sight,
As the runner hit the tackler with a thud,
And splendid boys struggled on full of fight,
Or kissed the bosom of their Mother Mud.
And I am half inclined to think him right.
Football like war, for all the gold and blood
Wasted upon it, brings right into play
Virtues a man finds useful any day.

What pleased him best was the fair attitude
Of thoughtless valiance that breaks but will not bend,
Which makes Discobolus himself look crude
And posed—the linesman leaping to defend
The breach the adversary's wit has hewed,
The racing half-back sweeping round the end,
And the indescribable and panther grace
Of the last tackler waiting in his place.

I have forgotten how that game came out,
And whether it was tied or won and lost.
Nor do I care, though victory turned to rout.
How many times the various line was crossed
May interest statisticians without doubt,
But never me with ten degrees of frost.
One thing I know. Though the glass drew near zero,
Anderson in some way became a hero.

And Conway bore him shouting from the field,
As the game ended, and the blizzard urged
His lances on in earnest. And they pealed
The college-bell, and citizens emerged
On ice-bound sidewalks where the slush congealed,
Supposing that a conflagration surged,
Whence the tradition binding to this hour
That none may ring the bell in Conway Tower.

Except on Feast-days, or for fire or flood,
Sudden death or analogous disaster.
Prescott next morning plowing through the mud
To chapel, met Lush with a sticking-plaster
Over his nose, and one eye dark with blood
Coagulate. The sheep observed his pastor,
And said: "Professor, you'll be glad to hear
"We're going to play Gambier again next year."

With utter seriousness he fell explaining
Just how important this was in his view
He talked of punts and dropkicks and of gaining
Innumerable yards by plunging through.

He had a thousand theories of training,
And bored Professor Prescott black and blue,
Who was naturally too courteous to suggest
That other subjects had their interest.

And Lush was very great upon one head.
Football would put old Conway on the map.
"We're a freshwater College," so he said,
"For which those Easterners don't give a rap.
"We're going to show them that the West's not dead.
"We've got our eyes already on a chap.
"He's promised Anderson he's coming here.
"My father's going to stake him for a year."

And right there Prescott felt a vague hostility
Kindling within him. It appeared a shame
That a gladiator's hideous agility
And prowess in what ought to be a game
Should win him what a young man of ability
Would give an eye for. He was about to frame
A tart opinion, when Lush's blackened eye
Lit, as he said: "There's Anderson. Good-bye."

The green bud sweetened the New Year at last.
His cottage rose up slowly, beam and strut.
And ere its whitest bract the dogwood cast
To winds of April, from Connecticut
The damsel came to whom he was joined fast
In holy bands. The garden-gate was shut
On Eve and Adam in a summer dream,
While in the meadow laughed the little stream.

September came, and many girls and boys.
(The West, you know, devised co-education.)
It seemed to Prescott that they made more noise
Than heretofore, and had less concentration
As to their tasks. But his domestic joys
Absorbed him, and a versified translation
Of Ovid. Yet he somehow grew aware
Of something—Was it football?—in the air.

Lush sought him the first morning with a giant,
Shambling and elephantine, at his heel,
Who cast a look half frightened, half defiant
At Prescott, and gripped his hand with grip of steel.
The upper-classman, easy and self-reliant,
While the huge boy to his toes made vague appeal
And alternated burning red and pallor,
Told Prescott that the mighty man of valor

Was in His Horace and his Virgil section,
As if with an intention to imply
Professor Prescott might by indirection
Conceive a compliment was paid thereby.
Vast was the creature, sallow of complexion.
Craggily gaunt, his stature reached the sky.
His vacuous eyes rotated in a head
That looked like Lincoln's, but their glance was dead,

And their dull motion was perturbed and slow
As a Nation article on a well lost cause,
Or the first night of any Yankee show,
Slow as an actress to ignore applause.

Crablike his glances wavered to and fro.
Mechanically he opened his huge jaws,
And closed them without utterance again,
While slow embarrassments besieged his brain.

Prescott observed him daily as he strove
With the complexities of Roman thought.
Agamemnon in the net the harlot wove
Was not more irremediably caught,
When the axe was lifted in the dreadful grove.
The oaf recited with a glance distraught,
And as devoid of sanity or hope
As a nigger's when the lynchers knot the rope.

His name was Swett. He had no sense at all.
Yet Prescott hardly knew him when he saw
The elephantine creature bear the ball
Amid the battle. The semi-simian, raw
Look had departed, and imperial
The jack-ass ruled the whirlwind, and his paw
Crashed downward with its overwhelming weight,
Like Brennus' sword, the trembling scale of fate.

Gambier was humbled in the dust that year.
Terrible was the ruin wrought by Swett.
A cross between a tiger and a deer,
He was a tribulation and a threat.
Anderson's glory scarcely shone so clear,
And Lush's tactics which won many a bet,
Were in the sequel tacitly ignored
By the plaudits of the enthusiastic horde.

Two thousand people by the sidelines milled
That afternoon, as the gold twilight mellowed.
High over all female falsettos trilled,
And all undrilled the male spectator bellowed,
When his favorite demi-god was maimed or killed.
In fact I own a clipping torn and yellowed,
Which indicates that Conway's peerless cheer
Was not invented till the ensuing year.

At any rate 'twas then they charged admission
For the first time, and the first grandstand rose.
But pardon me. Historic erudition
Is out of place in poetry or prose.
Gambier went home in horror and contrition
With broken heart, black eye, and bloody nose,
While Conway round the bonfire catfits threw,
Intact of heart, but battered black and blue.

Nonetheless Prescott when a week had passed
Beheld that Telamonian Ajax Swett
Glaring upon the blackboard, all aghast,
Where the last questions of the term were set.
His slow brain faltered, for he was stuck fast,
And could envisage no device to get
Out of his intellectual Bog Serbonian.
Tears formed in his dull eyes, poor Telamonian.

Passed his brief glory, the sad paladin
Would be, in the language of the people, flunked.
The grid-iron triumph might be his to win,
Not so the honors of the tongues defunct,

As he stumbled over every ad and in,
Without an inklng of the mood subjunct-
Ive, and his so-called intellectuals cracked
Before conditions in accord with fact.

But a worse thing lay behind the sad foreboding
That Prescott on the giant's features saw.
He had not guessed what forces had been goading
The moron's spirit with a poisoned claw.
Half of Swett's screed was mere brain-rot corroding.
The other half was fair without a flaw,
Identical in its Ciceronian twist
With the paper of the prize class-classicist.

Followed a curious and inglorious scene,
When the egregious Ajax was confronted
With the papers and a Presbyterian dean,
Whose sense of humor had been sadly blunted.
The victim sobbed and gulped, and in between
Gazed on his persecutors with a hunted
Look. And his tone was tragic when he spake:
"I cribbed, I cribbed, but all for Conway's sake."

So Swett was lost to Conway. And there grew
A rumor that an enemy of youth
Presided over Latin, one who slew
His thousands, and ten thousands without ruth.
And the tradition in a year or two
Took on the very lineaments of truth,
For then a portent in a Gambier game
Befell that is remembered yet with shame.

In the first half Conway snowed Gambier under.
The stands were rhythmic with the crackling cheer.
As the red-shirted louts began to thunder
On toward the final victory of the year,
Till the half ended, hapless chance and blunder
Cost the half-hearted foemen bitter dear.
In fact there never was a nambier pambier
Performance by a football team from Gambier.

Nineteen to nothing at the intermission
The score stood. When the interval was ended
With Gambier's host a fearful apparition
Into the white-barred field of war descended.
Swett in the pink and prime of hard condition
Towered 'mid the foemen, terrible and splendid.
And the hearts of Conway's thousands 'gan to quake
As they beheld the hairy traitor take

The kick-off. Ninety yards he ran it back.
They could not hold him with a barbed-wire fence.
Disabled champions wallowed in his track.
There were many nearly fatal accidents.
Till the last gun fired, without stint or slack,
He wrought a slaughter that was so immense
That Conway's sons, though wounded to the core,
Can somehow never recollect that score.

Five dreadful years that supermoron played
The man for Gambier. I think it was because
They gave him credit for studying the trade
Of blacksmith, and perhaps relaxed the laws

To let him through his course with passing grade.
So Conway men say, in whose heart yet gnaws
The bitter recollection of the years
Of subjugation. Then the picture clears.

Prescott had not perceived it was a time
Of tragedy. In the cottage by the glen
He had been happy weaving into rhyme
Ovid's remarks on Gods and things and men.
And rambler-roses had contrived to climb
Over his door. And grace was with him then,
And that which lifts a man out of the mob
Namely the fact that he adored his job.

In a world of mighty men he moved twice-born.
They made more fair for him the existing day.
He never felt amid the alien corn
As if they were two thousand years away.
For him they emptied an abundant horn,
And to his spirit nobly said their say
In glittering prose, or verse like breakers rolling,
The very essence of the soul controlling:

Horace, Catullus, whose ecstatic phrase
Burns on for ever in a generous brain,
And Juvenal, whose line like lightning plays,
Tined with a wrath that is not wholly sane,
Or he whom Dante did not dare to praise,
And who the Italian's praises might disdain,
Had the noblest nature that was ever born
Known the sublime infirmity of scorn.

Or the class-room hushed, as he discoursed of Homer,
Seeing in Ithaca the great bow bend,
Or the narrow galley ride the wine-dark comber,
And Achilles mourning for his fated friend.
For learning was to him not a misnomer
For deadly drudgery without an end,
A dull, interminable, unseemly traffic,
The robbery of graveyards paleographic.

Yet it hurt him, as he strove with dolts like Swett,
When for terrible split seconds he divined
That there was brightness they could never get
On the great page, beauty that strikes men blind
To small things. From that beauty as from a threat
They fled, preferring the moleskins of their kind,
And nourishing a quite unreasoning doubt
That dangerous learning yet might find them out.

Oh, strange dull human mind that dares not lift
Its glances to the firmament star-pattened,
That dodges grace and truth with clumsy shift,
Loving to batten where the swine have battened,
And hating movements is content to drift,
And whose obtuseness is yet further flattened
By contact with its neighbor's crudities.
If we *must* have brains, why have brains like these?

Prescott might give that up like you and me.
He even gave up being much annoyed
By the increasing imbecility
He saw in the undergraduate anthropoid,

Whose interest more and more had come to be
Centred in the autumnal ellipsoid.
I wrench that accent for the sake of rhyme.
Just so their brains were wrenched at big game time.

Well he should worry, in their phrase uncouth.
They would in time to come learn better things.
It is ungenerous to be hard on youth,
However hard youth be. Experience brings
Knowledge—perhaps—of beauty and of truth.
And if right learning could not lend them wings
To soar about the summits he adored,
It was much to him that he himself had soared.

So would he muse in evening's lucid calms
While through the shadows his wife's violin
Discovered inner melody of Brahms,
And music like a spirit hovered in
The twilight, scattering odorous musk and balms
For souls grown weary in that daily din,
Which, by a curious misappropriation
Of terms, goes by the name of education.

So would he muse, nor knew that those sad years
When Conway bore the burden and the heat
Were seminal time when various ideas
Occurred to Lush by now "upon the Street"
In far New York where he bit off the ears
Of several men who tried to corner wheat.
For quite a month the inner cereal group
Were much disturbed by the newcomer's "coup."

At the next Commencement Lush was in his glory
As Conway's favored most successful son.
His classmates awestruck listened to the story
Of the appalling deeds that he had done.
It was no feeble and no transitory
Power that the young financial man had won,
As the white gymnasium rising by the side
Of the red brick old college testified.

That was symbolic. The white colonnade
Towered 'mid the maples spick and span and new,
And cast the library quite in the shade.
The chapel cheapened in the local view.
Lush in the choice of architect displayed
A good expensive taste, and gaily threw
A round half-million into the erection
Of a sublime Corinthian confection.

Nor was that all. The demi-god decreed
That Conway should no longer bow in shame
Before the cohorts Swett was wont to lead.
"You want," he said, "a coach that knows the game,
"A hard-boiled egg of the true fighting breed."
And from a played-out carriage-factory came
One who had made no millions, but whom fate
Determined that sports-writers should call great—

Even Anderson predestined to prevail,
The blond colossus with the one-track brain,
Who had failed in business, but who could not fail
Where footballs bounced on the resounding plain.

"Age could not wither him, nor custom stale
His infinite monotony." Disdain
Of highbrows did not bother him at all,
As he taught Conway now to bear the ball.

That was Swett's sixth and last year. I am told
That he was in the Gambier art-school then,
But what the casts that he contrived to mould,
Or what the savage tracings of his pen
I know not. Came a shuddering dawn and cold,
And in the fell cirque raged the mighty men.
In vain the Gambier stands to Swett appealed.
Four henchmen bore him senseless from the field.

While up and down thundered the vast machine
That had overthrown him in his pride of power,
Scoring at will, and pimpled youths obscene
Shrieked like black buzzards in the bull's last hour.
The slate was unmistakably wiped clean.
The cream of Gambier's happiness went sour.
And coaches aped at Harvard and at Yale,
The play men called "Anderson's fairy-tale."

So they put Conway on the map at last,
And her reputation—and enrolment—grew.
The college put away the mildewed past.
Prescott saw the faculty was changing too.
Strange men who looked like clergymen declassed
Garbled preposterous subjects queer and new.
They talked of moral values, uplift, and
The undergraduates ate out of their hand.

They were great on crowd-psychology. He heard
Them rant against the outworn shibboleth
Of classic culture. Half way it occurred
To him that all their talk was like the breath
Of adolescent petulance absurd.
Could men like this talk beauty's self to death?
He shuddered as he heard the wonted roar,
For beauty has been talked to death before

By Ostrogoths and Vandals and Hindoos,
By Spencer, and by Stanley Hall and Lotze,
By Christians and Mahometans and Jews
With educational theories hotsy-totsy,
And in particular by earnest views
Advanced by Herbart and by Pestalozzi,
Whose votaries, fired by fury pedagogic,
Break Priscian's head and disembowel logic.

He did not murmur. There were students still,
Though for the most part pale and washed-out things,
Who took his courses of their own free will,
And drank with him the Heliconian Springs,
Poor ugly girls all innocent of frill,
Whose intellects were generally in slings,
And invalid boys. As Swinburne says, "Apollo
"Is a very, very bitter god to follow."

And at rare intervals, say a year or two,
Prescott would come on a superior mind.
And then his world would like a snake renew
Its glory, as bright youth began to find

The golden age again. It found it too.
He saw to that, though he was always kind
To his invalids, because he had learned how.
There was a trouble in his household now.

He scarce knew what. The sweet-strained violin
Discoursed the noble symphonies no more.
And various doctors striding out and in
Imparted to him portions of their lore.
His wife lay very quiet, pinched, and thin,
Seeming even lovelier than she was before,
And smiling in her sweet familiar fashion,
While something drained her forces like a passion.

It was relentless like those outer things,
Of which he had grown increasingly aware.
It stabbed at beauty with invisible stings.
It made a darkness in the noonday air.
Sleepless at night the overshadowing wings
Beat, and a dolorous presence seemed to stare
Out of the infinite at him. The doctors shrewd
Pooh-poohed his ignorant solicitude,

And talked a lot "of diet and X-rays
And the glorious gains of science." They made tests
Innumerable and infinite delays.
There were consultations and professional jests.
And afterwards they went upon their ways,
Having, of course, their other interests,
Leaving Prescott agonized in the old groove
With Mrs. Prescott who did not improve.

Spring after spring brought the white dogwood flower.
The summer moonlight whitened the fair glen.
The scarlet autumn gloried in its hour,
And winter's winding-sheet was spread again.
Prescott abode a pawn within the power
Of obscure terror. The merry world of men
Was very far away from his reality
Where love was touching fingers with mortality.

Yet there was peace there and the sentiment
Of the imperishable. The grove of oak,
Opposite his window where the sweet stream went,
A solemn and eternal language spoke.
She lived. His moments gave him that content.
And when the glory of the red dawn broke
She smiled with him to see the scarlet fires
Behind the leafed trees or bare ruined choirs.

But in his trouble I forget my theme
And Lush, who was by this time a trustee
Of Conway, and whose brain conceived a scheme
Appealing to his idiosyncrasy.
He was the sort to realize a dream.
Quiet was a weird that Lush could never dree.
His mind made up was nickel and vanadium.
So Conway simply had to have that Stadium.

For men were building the whole country o'er
Huge structures whence to view the fighting grounds
Where the elevens battle to a score—
Things that one day when time has passed our bounds

And all our trust and travail are no more,
Will puzzle archæologists, as Mounds
Perplex those gentry now where they exhume
Rose-pearls from a forgotten chieftain's tomb.

Almost I can foresee what they'll endite,
Their theories of the uses of those vast
Amphitheatrical ruins from the night
Of History. What guesses they will cast
Back at us, speculating on the rite
We celebrated in the abysmal past,
Inferring doubtless we were a cultured crew
Who built for all time better than we knew,

And worshipped sky-gods, pointing the long axis
Of each ellipse straight to the Northern Star.
They'll date us from the altered parallaxes
Of the Heavens in that epoch dim and far.
Our lives, our deaths, our loves, our income taxes,
They will evoke like Genii from the jar.
And they will link the builders of the stadium
With the culture epoch they'll call palaeo-radium,

While the very dust that shall o'ercome them drifts
Invincible over the concrete tiers,
And from the gap-toothed cracks the dogwood lifts
White boughs again in the girlhood of the years,
Or violets slip into their spring-shifts,
And the woodchuck in the thicket cocks his ears
Where once our scene played, being a cautious beast.
But I'm off my subject—ten thousand years at least.

Jack Lush begat it in the Alumni paper.
There were discussions full of verve and heat.
The undergraduate press began to vapor
As the undergraduate heart began to beat.
And every real estate man cut a caper
And picked a site upon his favorite street.
In the vast enthusiasm several factors
Entered—Portland cement men and contractors,

Who always had loved Conway from the heart.
The faculty, as usual behind
The spirit of the age, took little part
At first. But a professor of the kind
I erewhile mentioned, with consummate art,
The anachronistic dryasdusts aligned,
Who marched in the procession rub-a-dub,
With all the fervor of a rotary club.

Those were great days for Conway. Yet men speak
With awe of the tremendous drive Lush drave,
Tears in their voices, a flush upon the cheek,
Telling how the local undertakers gave
Ten thousand bucks, and for a dreadful week
The barbers charged two dollars for a shave,
Reserving for themselves two bits to fee 'em,
While the rest went to build the Coliseum.

In justice to Jack Lush, it should be stated
He gave an actual million to the cause,
And time, of course, which can't be estimated,
And perhaps took his payment in applause.

But his gift, as the press says, was predicated
On inconvenient economic laws.
And Conway had to raise Oh lor! Oh lor!
Unpauperized another million more.

Anyhow they raised it, and a hundred fights
Started at once. The local papers raged
Over the pros and cons of various sites,
Whose charms they urged with fury unassuaged.
On every side was talk of wrongs and rights.
And while the highest war the champions waged,
Jack Lush had bought, without their will or knowledge,
The perfect site, and given it to the college.

Prescott first heard of that munificence
One twilight, as the soft dark shadows fell,
And the evening-paper flew across the fence
That ran between his garden and the dell,
Where the stream babbled in sweet somnolence,
While the bees hummed in the roses he loved well.
Across the page the staring headlines spread.
Only half comprehendingly he read

The text that flanked the enormous half-tone cut
Of a structure, whose design was founded on
The vast curve of a giant cocoanut,
With features borrowed from the Parthenon
And later Renaissance suggestions—But
I won't go on with the comparison.
The thing that brought excitement to the height
Was the determination of the site,

Which, to be brief, was that same pleasant glen
Where hope and youth had been and were no more,
Where he took refuge from the world of men.
From his hand the paper fluttered to the floor.
That concrete horror swam into his ken.
Jack Lush! He thought how twenty years before
He had met Anderson and Lush returning
In the autumn twilight 'neath a wild sky burning.

And now—now—now—to violate the place,
Where if grief were, at least a dove-like peace
Had ever brooded. Blood rushed to his face.
On his mild forehead deepened a black crease.
That horrible hulk of concrete without grace,
That ghastly Gothic travesty on Greece!
He glared at the white architectural sketch,
Which would have made Carrére and Hastings retch.

And this would tramp his oak and dogwood down,
Pashing their life out with a brute's intents.
And he was helpless. He might rage and frown.
Would that chastise this shameful insolence?
That dolts might gambol to amuse the clown,
The beauty that had been his one defence
Must be stamped out, obliterated, raped
By the multitudinous, questionably shaped

Leviathan, polyp-minded, million-handed,
Ape-curious, heartless, careless, tasteless, aimless,
That wanted sport, and got what it commanded,
A vulgar Rome, inglorious, and nameless.

Oh for a Juvenal, ferocious, candid,
To pillory this crowd that laid its shameless
Tentacular fingers upon exquisite things.
Suddenly his hysteria took wings

And fled. It was, and it would have to be
Just as he was himself. So it was fated.
He carried to his wife her toast and tea,
And, while she supped, inly he cogitated
The consolations of philosophy
Against that ravaging vision unabated.
That night he dreamed that the Chimeras fell
From the Gorgons won the championship of Hell,

And were to play the Ghouls, West against East.
The gridiron was a lake of flaming ore.
The referee was the ten-headed beast,
The umpire the prodigious minotaur.
And the chimeric captain had released
His views on trying to keep down the score.
He thought the field was hardly fast enough
For the three-headed crowd to do their stuff.

Came the surveyors. Fell the dogwood-bough
With all its blanched petals 'neath the axe.
The new-leafed oak dropped headlong anyhow.
The caterpillar-truck's tremendous tracks
Obliterated age-old leaf-mould now.
The very stream its prattle must relax,
Silent and stifled in the darkling gripe
Of a sable subterranean sewer-pipe.

Steam-shovels hawked and snorted like asthmatic
Behemoths suffering from mal de mer.
At night they cast infernal shades erratic
Under the blue-barbed arc-light's hellish glare.
And foremen bellowed curses autocratic,
And dynamite exploded everywhere,
Till carpenters arrived in wasplike swarms,
Hammering like Maxims on the concrete forms.

Beauty and privacy and evening quiet
Vanished for ever 'neath the huge white ramp,
Whose bleak forerunners were mechanic riot
And the crash and roar of an artillery-camp.
And the doctor, cocking a perturbéd eye at
The white-robed nurse with the chart beside the lamp,
Said bitterly to Prescott: "All this row
Isn't helping her. But we can't move her now."

Still she survived. The infernal racket ended
In its due course, and a new siege began.
There was a dedication-function splendid,
And a crowd, which in the memory of man
Was not exceeded, at the cirque attended.
When the show was o'er, with one accord they ran
Through Prescott's little garden, tramping down
His flowers in their headlong rush to town.

Jack Lush beheld the pansies' immolation,
As from the stadium's vomiting gates he passed
And it gave him a dissatisfied sensation
He hardly knew of what. The popular blast

Blew by, and left its trail of desolation.
As Lush walked on, a backward look he cast.
He wrote next day to Prescott that no doubt
The college would be glad to buy him out

For solid shekels. And he himself would see
That trespasses should not occur again.
He was as good too as his guarantee.
Workmen arrived, and Prescott's small domain
Was girded with much barbed-wire tracery,
And furnished with a pad-lock and a chain.
And at the games policemen badged with brass
Kept yet more brazen hoodlums off the grass.

Yet Prescott was not satisfied. An end
Somehow he knew was coming. And he saw
How all things in that house began to tend
On to mortality—a descending awe.
The hard-boiled doctor gently as a friend
Addressed him. Prescott knew that not a straw
Of hope remained—but parting of the breath,
And in that house the privacy of death.

Three days that last fight lasted. On the third
The din of factory whistles blared at noon.
Far off on the November air he heard
Brass-bands that crashed out Conway's football tune.
Nearer they drew, and shouting vast and blurred
As of Riffians in Mountains of the Moon
Rose in a tumult and a yell confused.
America was going to be amused.

The crowd poured on. The doctor wrangled through
The close-locked ranks in his sputtering machine,
Tooting his horn above the hullabaloo.
He brought another measure of morphine,
Which helps us from the old sleep to the new
Whose meaning we divine not, if it mean
Or mean not. He filled the needle, while a vast
Silence possessed the adjacent mobs at last,

Followed by a yell as if of Hell broke loose,
As the doctor pressed the needle's piston down.
Prescott scarcely heard. His senses seemed obtuse.
The doctor cleansed the needle, with a frown.
The white nurse bit her lip. And like the deuce
Sounds like to air-raids in a populous town
Broke out once more with a catastrophic smash,
And the brass-bands clamored with a jazz-bang crash.

The mask-like face was flickerless. The room
Took on by turns appropriate quiet, or
Vibrated to the shattering siss-boom
Of Gambier and Conway's mimic war.
Bride-like his wife lay waiting for the groom,
And Prescott studied scratches on the floor
And fly-specks on the ceiling, Heaven and Hell
Behind them, while upswelled or sank the yell.

The minutes dragged their length away like slugs,
Leaving each its slime of agony behind.
A bar of sun-shine crawled across the rugs,
Where it had crept athwart a broken blind.

The table set with iridescent drugs
Gleamed brilliantly while Prescott sought to find
Lost consolations. In vain his bleak mind tossed
In that dim sea. They were consolations lost.

The shouts were growing as the ending came,
Mingled with song that choked the hateful sky.
Where once his oak-trees burgeoned, scarlet flame
Irradiated evening. Feet stormed by,
And Gambier shouted, issuing from the game
Shouldering victorious champions on high,
Cheer after cheer, louder and louder yet
Chanting the name invincible of Swett.

Poor Prescott caught one devastating glimpse,
As the infuriate doctor drew the shade,
Of a battalion of infernal imps
Marching along as if upon parade.
They bore a dozen adolescent simps
And one vast form, stoop-shouldered and decayed,
Swett, worthy father of a hopeless son,
Who had received the forward pass which won.

The wild roar did not slacken. Yet very still
The chamber grew, besieged by hateful noise.
They knew the invisible groom had had his will
The dust to which all golden girls and boys
And chimney-sweepers come, for good or ill
Lay without throb and done with all employs.
The doctor rose erect, pulled down his waistcoat,
And said: "I did my best. I'm sorry Prescott."

They led him like an infant from the room.
The white nurse sneaked some whiskey in the tea
She brought him, as November's early gloom
Sank over all the landskip silently,
Till the full moon came issuing from the womb
Of darkness, like that brilliant agony
Rising within his spirit to effuse
All nature with intolerable hues.

He stepped outdoors. Gigantic, argentine,
And death-like glimmered the portentous wall,
A nightmare barrier, inimical, obscene,
'Neath which it was his destiny to crawl
Defeated, where his hope and trust had been,
Comfortless, desolate, degraded, small,
Broken, and impotent to resurrect
Poor beauty with mortality infect.

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